THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

# METAFICTION AND POSTMODERNISM IN FOUR CANADIAN NOVELS

BY

JANET E. DAVIDSON

A THESIS
SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH
IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF ARTS

DEPARTMENT OF COMPARATIVE LITERATURE

EDMONTON, ALBERTA
(SPRING 1989)

National Library of Canada
Bibliothèque nationale du Canada

Canadian Theses Service
Service des thèses canadiennes

Ottawa, Canada
K1A 0N4

The author has granted an irrevocable non-exclusive licence allowing the National Library of Canada to reproduce, loan, distribute or sell copies of his/her thesis by any means and in any form or format, making this thesis available to interested persons.

The author retains ownership of the copyright in his/her thesis. Neither the thesis nor substantial extracts from it may be printed or otherwise reproduced without his/her permission.

L'auteur a accordé une licence irrévocable et non exclusive permettant à la Bibliothèque nationale du Canada de reproduire, prêter, distribuer ou vendre des copies de sa thèse de quelque manière et sous quelque forme que ce soit pour mettre des exemplaires de cette thèse à la disposition des personnes intéressées.

L'auteur conserve la propriété du droit d'auteur qui protège sa thèse. Ni la thèse ni des extraits substantiels de celle-ci ne doivent être imprimés ou autrement reproduits sans son autorisation.

ISBN 0-315-52978-4

Canada

THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

RELEASE FORM

NAME OF AUTHOR: Janet E. Davidson

TITLE OF THESIS: Metafiction and Postmodernism in Four Canadian Novels

DEGREE: Master of Arts

YEAR THIS DEGEE GRANTED: 1989

Permission is hereby granted to THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA LIBRARY to reproduce single copies of this thesis and to lend or sell such copies for private, scholarly or scientific research purposes only.

The author reserves other publication rights, and neither the thesis nor extensive extracts from it may be printed or otherwise reproduced without the author's written permission.

J.E. Davidson

9658 · 77 Ave.

Edmonton, Alberta

Date: April 21, 1989

THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research for acceptance, a thesis entitled "Metafiction and Postmodernism in Four Canadian Novels" submitted by Janet E. Davidson in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

E.D. Blodgett
(Supervisor)

A.G. Purdy

Milan V. Dimić

Date: April 13, 1989

## ABSTRACT

Although metafiction (self-conscious fiction) is often held to be the literary expression of postmodernism, its position within the postmodern canon is highly ambiguous: some critics use "postmodern" and "metafictional" synonymously, while others deny that metafiction is at all postmodern in orientation. The works discussed in this thesis are explicitly and implicitly metafictional in technique and content. Operating from a relatively formal definition of metafiction (as an anti-realist mode of writing) I examine, first, to what degree these works can be considered metafictional, and secondly, to what extent these works reflect the characteristics and principles of postmodernism.

Rudy Wiebe's "historiographic metafiction" is contrasted with Anne Hébert's "discourse of the unreal." Although both use comparable metafictional techniques to investigate modern and postmodern themes and both self-consciously explore the central role of language in literature, Wiebe's novel is ultimately traditional in vision; Hébert's work, likewise, does not represent a postmodernist world or approach.

George Bowering and Victor-Lévy Beaulieu, by contrast, are both overtly metafictional and postmodern in the fictional worlds they create. However, they achieve their similar purposes by very different means. Beaulieu's work draws the reader into a postmodern, fictional world, working from the outside in. Bowering repeatedly forces the reader "out" of the text, back into the real world. The self-consciousness of their texts is also therefore manifested very differently: Bowering's text displays an explicit, intrusive authorial consciousness, Beaulieu's text, an absence of explicit, authorial intervention.

On the basis of this analysis, I conclude that it is necessary not only to discriminate among types and degrees of self-consciousness, but also to look at the purposes served by this essentially technical manipulation of form; in other words, that it is necessary to distinguish between metafiction and postmodernism. Although metafictional techniques are a strategy commonly employed by postmodernist writers, the texts selected show that it is possible to be metafictional without being postmodern, and postmodern without being metafictional.

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank my supervisor and my two readers, Dr. E.D. Blodgett, Dr. M.V. Dimic, and Dr. A. Purdy, for their guidance and editorial comments. I must also thank my sisters, Shirley, Carol and Mary Ellen, and my parents, for their encouragement and support.

I would also like to express my gratitude to Stan Beeler for his kind, patient and unfailing help in learning to use a computer, and to Virginia Durkson for her editing, her books, and the many hours she spent discussing postmodernism with me.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER PAGE

I. Introduction ........................................1

II. Postmodernism and Metafiction ....................10

III. Covert Metafiction: Wiebe's Historiographic Metafiction and Hébert's Discourse of the Unreal..37

IV. Overt Metafiction: Inside Beaulieu and Outside Bowering ............................86

V. Concluding Remarks ..............................124

Notes ................................................137

Works Consulted .....................................153

## Abbreviations

The following abbreviations are employed:

| | |
|---|---|
| TTOBB | *The Temptations of Big Bear*, by Rudy Wiebe. |
| LFDB | *les Fous de Bassan*, by Anne Hébert. |
| LG | *les Grands-pères*, by Victor Lévy-Beaulieu. |
| ASSB | *A Short Sad Book*, by George Bowering. |

# I: Introduction

> A metafictional device or element is one that foregrounds some aspect of the writing, reading, or structure of a work that the applicable canons of standard (realistic) practice would expect to be backgrounded; or is such a foregrounded element itself. Metafiction uses techniques to systematically heighten its own status as fiction. Metafiction is therefore more a formal term than an historical one, and is not solely a postmodern (or modern) possession.[1]

Defining metafiction is not quite as simple as this formal definition would lead one to believe, which is precisely why many discussions of postmodernism begin with: "beware of labels, lest you be tempted into a fruitless search for something that in reality exists in language only."[2] "Metafiction" and "postmodern" are exactly such labels, terms that are used by critics to describe in a general way a complex set of ideas or tendencies and which serve as a critical convenience, but which can also be applied to a wide variety of works of art. There is little agreement about what these terms refer to, and there are many other, competing terms: experimental and innovative, avant-garde, ludic, areal or irreal, non-representational, disruptive, anti-, neo-, para-, sur-, superfiction, post-realistic, contemporary, contemporary modernist, post-contemporary, the introverted novel, the self-begetting novel, the new fiction, the nouveau roman, the nouveau nouveau roman, and, of course, postmodernist fiction.[3]

Metafiction is generally held to mean texts which are, in some way, self-representational, self-conscious, or self-reflexive. Essentially, metafiction explores a theory of fiction through the practice of writing fiction.[4] Patricia Waugh offers a more expansive definition of metafiction, taking it, as most do, beyond the merely formal:

> Metafiction is a term given to fictional writing which self-consciously and systematically draws attention to its status as an artefact in order to pose questions about the relationship between fiction and reality.... Such writings not only examine the fundamental structures of narrative fiction, they also explore the possible fictionality of the world outside the literary fictional text.[5]

Metafiction, broadly defined, is as old or older than the novel itself and "is a tendency or function inherent in all novels."[6] As Waugh remarks, it

> ...is not so much a sub-genre of the novel as a tendency within the novel which operates through exaggeration of the tensions and oppositions inherent in all novels: of frame and frame-break, of technique and counter-technique, of construction and deconstruction of illusion.[7]

Thus, Robert Alter argues that "self-consciousness" in the novel truly begins with Cervantes and the critical-philosophical awareness that "literary realism is a tantalizing contradiction in terms."[8] As Don Quixote repeatedly discovers, the ontology of fictional worlds is essentially problematic.

Metafiction is a strategy that acts reflexively; it addresses and embodies the tension maintained between storytelling and reality, and leads, therefore, to questions about the relationship of literature to the world. The expression of this tension is, of course, evident in a great many works (Alter argues that there are metafictional elements in most, if not all, novels), but it is the dominant function in those texts which are considered to be metafictional.[9]

> A fully self-conscious novel... is one in which from beginning to end,... there is a consistent effort to convey to us a sense of the fictional world as an authorial construct set up against a background of literary tradition and convention.[10]

Metafictional writing is not a "discursive exposition"; it is a "technical manipulation of the very form that purports to represent reality."[11] Defined formally as an anti-mimetic mode of writing, metafiction is not necessarily postmodern at all; however, metafiction, or more precisely, self-conscious fiction, is often held to be the literary expression of the postmodern cultural and aesthetic revolution. In current criticism, the two terms are often simply equated: the self-consciousness of metafiction, parodying and challenging the practices of mimetic narrative, is seen as an expression of the "self-conscious slippage between the discourses of art and life" characteristic of postmodernism.[12] There is, however, an important distinction to be made between "metafiction" and "postmodernism." It is necessary to define, limit, and separate the two: metafiction is essentially a formal term, designating a mode of writing which operates in opposition to the literary conventions of realism, whereas postmodernism may be called an ideology, a _Weltanschauung_ that has been held to encompass nearly every aspect of contemporary culture and is considered to represent the _fin-de-millenium_ mood of our times.[13] Although there is a tendency to use the terms synonymously, it is necessary to note that metafictional techniques are only one strategy employed by postmodernist writers, along with many other experiments with form which are not necessarily self-conscious.

Literary postmodernism is a "discursive artifact," as Brian McHale calls it, a "literary-historical fiction."[14] The term is used to designate both a literary historical movement, a period, as well as a poetics, a repertory of motifs and devices and an organized system of relations and differences shared by a particular class of texts.[15] Very generally, postmodernist poetics can be described as dominated by ontological issues, in contrast to the epistemological issues of modernism.[16] As McHale points out, however, there are various ways to construct a poetics of postmodernism, "none of them any less 'true' or less fictional than the others."[17]

Many attempts have been made to describe the central features of postmodernism, but beyond some simple generalizations, or specific and technical references to certain works, there is no real consensus about what the term means. Because eclecticism is one of its central features, a clear and concise definition may be impossible; "postmodern" is a term that can be applied to a number of works, differing greatly in form and style. Postmodernism is both a literary current and a particular literary code with compositional and syntactical conventions, a critical labelling that can be applied to many genres: fiction, drama, poetry. The descriptive poetics of postmodernism more or less take the form of a heterogeneous catalogue of features "typically organized in terms of oppositions with features of modernist poetics."[18] Much depends on the way in which the distinctive features of postmodernism are defined, however, and "the analysis of individual texts which are held to be postmodern inevitably leads to problems of definition and conceptualization."[19] As an adequate discussion of postmodernist critical theory is beyond the scope of this thesis, I will assume that postmodernism is a literary current with definite "historical, geographical, and sociological boundaries,"[20] and any generalizations will be qualified, restricted and contingent.

My purpose here is to argue for the need to discriminate between "metafiction" and "postmodernism." The term "postmodernist" can certainly be applied to some metafictional texts, and as Waugh notes, "nearly all contemporary experimental writing displays some explicitly metafictional strategies."[21] Nevertheless, metafictional writing is only one of the techniques available to postmodernist writers; such writing does not, by itself, create a postmodernist text. If we consider four works drawn from contemporary Canadian literature, the need to discriminate between these two terms becomes apparent. Rudy Wiebe´s The Temptations of Big Bear, Anne Hébert´s les Fous de Bassan, Victor-Lévy Beaulieu´s les Grands-pères, and George Bowering´s A Short Sad Book are very different formally, thematically and stylistically, yet all have been labelled as self-conscious and postmodern; all have been subsumed under a common description. Although each of the novels seems to invite the possibility of using these terms to describe them, a comparison of the texts would seem to indicate that some distinction is necessary. If four such different modes of contemporary writing can be put in the same category, the critical categories are impossibly broad in scope, and therefore useless.

These four works demonstrate that there is a problem in the critical discourse that surrounds the terms. Simply equating "metafictional" with "postmodernist," as many critics do, blurs the distinctions between these concepts, sends false signals to the reader, and creates the perception of metafiction as a kind of sub-category of postmodernist fiction. Because the distinctions are blurred in the critical literature, they are also blurred in our understanding of the texts that are often deemed to represent these critical categories. A comparison of these four novels reveals that "postmodern" and "metafictional" are not critically equivalent; by examining these texts, we can arrive at conclusions about why this distinction is necessary. These works are best understood if we have a more discriminating critical framework; if we see metafiction as distinct from postmodernism, these texts are more easily categorized, a better understanding of their place within the different streams of contemporary writing can be reached, and the theoretical issues involved made more precise. By making this distiction, "metafiction" and "postmodernism" become much more powerful and useful terms for distinguishing between different types and modes of literature.

These four novels raise an important question: when does self-consciousness in the novel (a feature that is arguably inherent in all novels) become a part of the particular literary code that is held to be postmodern? When is metafiction also postmodern? This question can be answered by showing that there are varying degrees of self-consciousness and that such strategies can be used for a number of purposes. In other words, texts can be metafictional without being postmodern, and postmodern without being explicitly, overtly or formally self-conscious. The writers I have selected illustrate the problem clearly and make an interesting contrast because they offer different perspectives on the metafictional process and shift the emphasis in different ways; each text can be critically positioned at variant points along a metafictional spectrum. I will not provide an exhaustive analysis of these works, but rather, will focus on the metafictional elements of these works and the contexts in which they occur in order to illustrate that "postmodern" and "metafictional" are not terms that are interchangeable.

Beginning with the established, general consensus of what constitutes literary postmodernism, the different ways in which the distinctive features have been defined can be examined. The analytical approach used is determined by the goal in mind: to examine the critical categories constructed for metafiction (which may be both included in and excluded from the postmodern canon) and to examine to what extent textual analysis can confirm or refute that the novels discussed reflect the principles of postmodernism.[22] The first chapter is a review of the major critical definitions of postmodernism and the manner in which metafictional writing is or is not placed within the canon of postmodern fiction and theory. A more detailed discussion of metafiction and metafictional techniques distinguishes between types and degrees of self-consciousness and attempts to establish when self-consciousness in a novel can also be considered to be part of the postmodern literary code.

On the basis of this distinction, I examine four Canadian works: The Temptations of Big Bear, les Fous de Bassan, les Grands-pères, and A Short Sad Book, looking specifically at the metafictional techniques that are used and the purpose for which they are used. Was the author using metafictional forms to subvert or deride the realist/modernist code, that is, reflecting a recognizably postmodern orientation? If the author is attempting to break with certain conventions or codes, what, if anything, is being offered instead? The answers to these questions will lead, finally, to a discussion of whether or not these works can be considered postmodern, and to what extent they reflect a postmodern world-view.

## II: Postmodernism and Metafiction

Although the two terms are often used synonymously, it is possible to establish a critical distinction between postmodernism and metafiction. By looking at various definitions of postmodernism, and in particular, the role that self-consciousness plays, we can understand why metafiction has come to be seen as a form of postmodernism, and why there is so much confusion between the two terms. A review of the distinctive features of postmodernism as described by several well-known critics (some complementary, some contradictory) will provide an approximate, collective picture of the many unresolved issues within this literary phenomenon, and will help to illustrate precisely why self-referential literature is sometimes considered to be postmodern, and sometimes not. The basic distinction I will make is between metafiction as a mode of writing, a strategy that is employed by writers for a variety of purposes, and postmodernism as both a literary period and a poetics. Using a chart of metafictional techniques, I will illustrate the types and degrees of self-consciousness that can operate in fiction. What I wish to determine is under what conditions metafictional writing can also be considered postmodern, and to suggest why this terminological confusion has occurred.

The term postmodern is applied to architecture, music, and visual art, as well as literature, and has even been seen by some critics as a new episteme, "a force that permeates all of contemporary life."[1] Other critics, however, have denied the existence of it altogether and argue that postmodernism exists only as a theory or that it is simply a development within modernism. There are, of course, problems in naming or defining any literary current or period, but in the case of postmodernism, perceived as "transcending the traditional distinctions between the arts as well as between art and reality,"[2] the critical concepts are particularly ambiguous and unstable.

> We have arrived now at the relativistic conclusion that the concept of literary current or period is a mental construction, almost completely divorced from empirical reality, and as such a rather flexible instrument that may fit into almost any argument.[3]

"An absolute separation between investigating subject and examined object" may be impossible, but this is particularly a problem with any discussion of postmodernism, which focuses on this very issue.[4] One must attempt to distinguish between criticism and an analysis of postmodernism; it is also necessary to distinguish between literary postmodernism (which can incorporate criticism) and postmodernist criticism. The work of Derrida and de Man, for example, is seen as both contributing to and as exemplifying postmodernism.

There does not as yet seem to be any characterization of postmodernism that is widely accepted, nor even any agreement about whether the term should be used at all. Indeed, there may be several postmoderns within the "terminological labyrinth," and whether it will be possible to group all of these views under one highly abstracted, encompassing view remains to be seen.[5] We must distinguish between the various critical concepts to avoid the narrower definitions and to avoid simple category-making. On the one hand, a great many critics have attempted to describe various modes contained within the concept of postmodernism (Gerald Graff, Alan Wilde and others), and on the other, there are those critics like Matt Cohen who argue that postmodernism "lives only as a theory in criticism and not as a reality in fiction."[6] Two of the adjectives commonly applied to postmodernism are pluralistic and paradoxical; the diversity and contradictions among the definitions cannot be overstated.

Literary postmodernism is obviously not a unified movement, but "a term that serves most usefully as a general signifier."[7] The various aesthetic tendencies and other central issues can and have been approached from a variety of perspectives. Most commonly, postmodernism has been discussed as a product of "modern (and fashionable) variants of linguistic determinism," as a result of "simplified concepts of the empirical reality of literary communication," and finally, as a reaction to - or logical extension of - modernism and the realistic tradition.[8]

Postmodernist literature can be seen as merely an intensification of some aspects of modernism, yet some critics, such as Douwe Fokkema, see anti-modernism as one of the defining characteristics of postmodernism. Others, such as Larry McCaffery, claim that there is no clear line between modernism and postmodernism. One of the central characteristics of modernism is the loss of an optimistic faith in "certain verities and assurances which had shaped our notion of what fiction should be."[9] Many have traced the deeper roots of the modernist revolution in, for example, the philosophies of Kant and the existentialists, in science (the Uncertainty Principle), and "in a deeper awareness in most fields of learning about the role which subjectivity plays in the nature of our systems of thought."[10] Given such a context, realistic fiction - related to empiricism and rationalism - is inadequate in a world which now appears to be "an infinite series of random possibilities,... a world unhinged," in which "nothing temporal, spatial, perceptual, social or moral is fixed."[11] Many modernists thus rejected the notion of representation, with an emerging sense that only selective, individual perspectives which imposed a hypothetical order upon a chaotic and incomprehensible world could be presented. For many modernists, art was seen as a kind of last refuge for reason, beauty and truth, existing somewhere apart from sordid reality. Postmodernism called for a break with the elitism of modern art, presenting itself as anti-artistic and anti-serious, resisting interpretation. Such art simply "is," and must be experienced, as opposed to the hidden meaning or the "depths" in modern art. Modernism was seen as glorifying the abstract, the inanimate, and devaluing human experience; postmodernism represented a more phenomenal approach, celebrating the immediate. Brian McHale offers this distinction:

> The dominant of Modernist writing is epistemological. That is, modernist writing is designed to raise such questions as: what is there to be known? who knows it? how do they know it, and with what degree of certainty?... The dominant of postmodernist writing is ontological. That is, postmodernist writing is designed to raise such questions as: what is a world? what kinds of world are there, how are they constituted, and how do they differ? what is the mode of existence of a text, and what is the mode of existence of the world (or worlds) it projects?[12]

Unlike the modernist belief that art is autonomous, separate from the world, postmodernist art consciously situates itself in the context of its own creation and reception in an unstable social and ideological reality.[13] Thus, also, the postmodern view holds that fiction must acknowledge and expose its own artificial nature, challenging the conventions of the realist narrative, the line between fact and fiction, prose and poetry, and even, finally, the conventions of typography and pagination. Postmodernist art questions and de-familiarizes the things that once went without saying: character, predictable plots, the recycling of myths, realism. For this reason, postmodernist writers have also drawn upon genres considered to be sub-literary: science fiction, the detective novel, pornography and the Western. Paradoxically - for an art which rejects modernist abstractions - it is apparent that theoretical discourse is very much the frame of reference for postmodern art.

> Postmodern authors - operating in an aesthetic environment that has grown out of Saussaurian linguistics, Wittgenstein's notion of meaning-as-usage, structuralism, and deconstructive views of language --tend to manipulate words as changeable entities determined by the rules of the particular sign-system (thé fiction at hand).[14]

Attacking or reinterpreting mimesis - questioning the referentiality of language - is often considered to be a distinctly postmodern feature, although, as already noted, this process was an important part of the modernist code. Nevertheless, postmodernism was seen in the early seventies as an intellectual and philosophical revolt against modernism.

> [For postmodernist writers],skeptical of modernist notions of metaphor as a species of suprarational truth,...the world outside the subject...must be restored in all its object-ness to its total inaccessibility.... The difference and distance between subject and object must be accepted, not denied through metaphorical or mythical means.... [The postmodernists] deny unity,...ontological anchors, so-called higher discourses.[15]

Several critics have noted, however, that this development can be seen as nothing more than the next (or last) stage of the modernist revolt against traditional realism, a "radicalization of the doubts that beset Modernism, but were kept largely under control by the Modernist writers."[16] In this respect, a crucial distinction between modernism and postmodernism can be seen in the fragmentation of the narrative: although this process was present in modernism, the fragments could still be given a global interpretation and united. The fragmented text provided its own key, a code whereby the entire text could be integrated and understood by the reader. The narrative fragments of a postmodernist text, in contrast, cannot be totalized; the postmodernists seek to deny unity, not achieve it. The only way to motivate (or totalize) a postmodern novel is by stepping up a level, as in parody, or by stepping outside the text, or by appealing to some other totalizing system such as metaphysics. Postmodern writing does not supply the reader with a code for interpreting the text, thus "refusing to allow the reader the role of passive consumer or any means of arriving at a 'total' interpretation of the text."[17] Explicitly and overtly, postmodern fiction acknowledges the role of the reader and the reader's expectations in achieving intelligibility.

What postmodernist texts have in common is a sense that fiction must acknowledge its own artificial, constructed nature, laying bare the artifice of the realist illusion, and a "delight in verbal play and formal manipulations of fictive elements."[18] However, beyond generalizations such as these and perhaps because of the theoretical frame of reference which surrounds such works, critical definitions of what constitutes a postmodern concept or world view are ambivalent and contradictory. A brief examination of some of the major critical views will illustrate the many conflicting characteristics subsumed under the term postmodern.

Ihab Hassan's concept of postmodernism is closely connected to the concept of the decentered world of deconstructionism:

> Whereas Modernism... created its own forms of artistic Authority precisely because the centre no longer held, postmodernism has tended toward artistic anarchy in deeper complicity with things falling apart - or has tended toward Pop.[19]

Postmodern writing, according to Hassan, includes metafiction, the non-fiction novel, American New Journalism, fantasy, science fiction, and the nouveau roman. Hassan includes the metafictional novel in the postmodern canon because "it reflects the awareness that all language is self-referential, even if it phenomenologically follows its own creation."[20] Fokkema identifies the following features:

> The Postmodernist world view...appears to be characterized by the conviction that any attempt towards constructing a world model - however much qualified by epistemological doubt - is pointless. The Postmodernists seem to believe that it is both impossible and useless to try and establish some hierarchical order, some system of priorities in life. If they admit a world model, it will be one based on maximum entropy..., i.e. on the equiprobability and equivalidity of all constituent elements... the world view of the

> postmodernists is built on the principle of nonhierarchy, but also on polemics against Modernism.[21]

Jürgen Habermas also defines postmodernism as fundamentally anti-modernist, but condemns the postmodernist's "disillusionment" with modernism as "a pretense for conservative positions."[22] The subjectivity and anti-historicism of postmodernism, according to Habermas, represent "the negation of art and philosophy" and are a cynical departure from the "progressive ideals" of modernism which began with the Enlightenment.[23]

According to William Spanos, "the paradigmatic archetype of the postmodern literary imagination is the anti-detective story" because it refuses to explain or solve the crime for the reader, thus frustrating the reader's expectations. (21) Spanos excludes those works that emphasize the purely linguistic nature of fiction as a "formalistic and aestheticizing evasion of the historical world." (21) Some types of metafiction would be included according to Spanos' definition, (self-conscious metafiction), and some would not (the purely self-reflexive works).

Lyotard insists on an awareness of "the unpresentable, the absence of a centre, at the core of things" as defining literary postmodernism, and defines the postmodern condition as "characterized by a distrust of 'totalizing' meta-theories, by a suspicion of those grand narrative systems that once made sense of everything for us."[24]

> Where can legitimacy reside after the dissolution of metanarratives? ...Postmodern legitimation can only be highly provisional, temporary, without ontological grounding. It is local and fragile and incorporates paradox. (33)

This illustrates the fundamental paradox in the nature of postmodernism: losing faith in someone else's system can suggest new models, but if one has lost faith in the very system of systems, how does one justify any new model?

In Literature Against Itself (1979), Gerald Graff extensively addresses this apparently self-destructive aspect and argues that according to the postmodern code "alienation from all significant reality is an inescapable condition." (37) Graff, among others, distinguishes between a self-reflexive mode, inner-directed to the work of art, and an impulse that is outer-directed and engages the world, both of which are subsumed under the term postmodern. This division into two main categories of what are loosely termed the "metafictional" and the "performative" or the "celebratory" is fairly popular. Raymond Federman sees a metafictional "act of self-reflection," as well as a creative impulse to "grab things as they are." (39) Charles Russell defines two main directions in postmodern literature, both of which "engage silence at the base of the artwork." (40)

> One direction emphasizes the epistemological dimension of the artwork,...the relationship of the individual to the environment...[but can be] nothing but responses to an essentially inaccessible world.... The other direction is the self-reflexive one... [which] focuses more

> intently on the prescriptive structure of language. (40)

These are the major critical conclusions; of course, the actual practice is another matter. Very generally, postmodernist fiction reflects an "overwhelming ontological doubt," (44) and there are two major modes or poles within the postmodern spectrum: "one that has given up referentiality and meaning," and "one that still seeks to be referential and sometimes even tries to establish local, temporary, and provisional truths." (47)

Since ontological doubt or radical indeterminacy is central to most concepts of postmodernism, textual analysis tends to focus on how literary works manifest that doubt. Metafictional techniques and strategies are obviously a tendency within postmodernist fiction, but it is important to note that a work can be postmodern without being metafictional. The encyclopedic, intricately structured works by such authors as Pynchon, Barth, or Coover, for example, are classified as postmodern, as well as works which affirm disorder and irrationalism, whose incoherent, fragmented texts supposedly mirror the entropy and chaos of the world, such as in the work of Barthelme or Raymond Federman. In addition, some of the paraliterary forms such as science fiction and detective fiction, which are not at all necessarily metafictional, have played an important part in postmodern writing. As McHale points out, postmodernist writing "does not embrace the entire range of contemporary innovative or avant-garde writing"; a text can be experimental without reflecting the indeterminacy of postmodernism.[25]

In practice, of course, a self-conscious work can belong to either postmodernist mode, although it has more obvious affinities with the non-referential, self-reflexive mode. Metafictional writing is often incorrectly defined as (and accused of) the postmodern impulse of turning away from reality and withdrawing into the "abstract, rarified realm of art itself," examining "language without regard to referents" similiar to the way abstract painters can experiment with forms, colors, or lines without regard for realism.[26] The purely self-reflexive work that concerns only itself, its own mechanisms, (as in William H. Gass, Robert Pinget, Steve Katz, or Barthelme) has drawn a great deal of negative criticism.

Brian McHale addresses these criticisms in Postmodernist Fiction (1987) and argues that postmodernism, for all its anti-realism, is actually continuing to be mimetic. "Where reality has become unreal, literature qualifies as our guide to reality by de-realizing itself."[27] Perhaps postmodern writers, "highly conscious of the problems of artistic legitimacy, simply sensed a need for novels to theorize about novels."[28] In any case, for the purposes of this thesis, it is only necessary to note that the postmodern emphasis on the self-referential nature of language, fiction-making, literary forms and theoretical discourse illustrates why metafiction is often seen as a type of postmodern fiction. The inverse, however, is not true: the reflexivity of metafiction does not at all necessarily represent the radical indeterminacy of postmodernism. The relationship between the two is highly ambiguous and in reality (or at least, in books) these critical labels are not interchangeable.

As previously noted, self-consciousness can be seen as a feature inherent in all novels, which may explain some of the confusion that surrounds the term "metafiction." Beyond a strictly formal level, metafictional writing is very difficult to categorize because it cuts across generic boundaries, and can operate on thematic, structural or narratorial levels. It can be reduced to elements within other forms; it can even intrude upon areas that previously would have been considered strictly critical. It is therefore necessary, for the sake of clarity, to limit "metafiction" to a formal level; in other words, to remember that it is a self-reflexive technique which operates in opposition to the illusion of literary realism and which can be used by writers for a wide variety of purposes.

Metafiction, at its very simplest, is a mode of writing that has a subversive function coupled with a realistic function that implies, or reaches for, a greater verisimilitude than that of its targeted code: the conventions of realism. (In this context, "realism" refers not only to the literary code systematized in the nineteenth century, but to the non-historical, referential transcription of "reality." Thus, Cervantes' Don Quixote, Sterne's Tristram Shandy and Diderot's Jacques le Fataliste, for example, are metafictional novels - self-consciously emphasizing the artifice of their fictionality - even though these works were written before the conventions of realism were formalized.) As a critical reworking or revising, metafiction involves a change of level, Hegel's Aufhebung, the "step up" in thinking which forces the reader to read on a different level but which does not remove the targeted concepts. Metafiction, like parody, attempts to undermine the referential illusion and is therefore implicitly trying to redefine what is real. The success of such an attempt depends on activating a certain knowledge or pattern of meaning in the reader; thus, there is always an element of intertextuality which is based, like parody, on an opposition or counter-practice and which can position metafiction along a spectrum from predominantly imitative to predominantly critical.

When metafiction is defined and discussed as a part of the anti-mimetic tradition, it contains the same double discourse as a parody: in order to displace, correct or deride a signifying system or code, it requires the very system which it is seeking to subvert. It cannot be autonomous in the sense of first order semiotics. "Metafiction explicitly lays bare the conventions of realism; it does not ignore or abandon them"; indeed, such conventions provide the norm, "the background against which the experimental strategies can foreground themselves."[29]

> Metafiction sets up an opposition, not to ostensibly 'objective' facts..., but to the language of the realistic novel....[It] self-consciously sets its individual parole against the langue...of the novel tradition,...setting the mirror of art up to its own linguistic or representational structures.[30]

At an elementary level, metafiction is defined as a mode of writing, a relational concept involving an element of incongruity. This type of metafiction is not, therefore, addressing "reality" on the same level as a work which attempts to be self-conscious about itself or to explore a theory of literature through itself.

Self-conscious fiction, writing about writing, is the most overt kind of metafiction, but it is only one aspect of it. A fully self-conscious novel consistently presents itself as an authorial construct. There are, however, various types and degrees of metafictional writing. The metafictional device that points or refers to itself (self-reflexive) and/or to the reader and the world (self-conscious) must have some significant weight in the novel as a whole for a work to be considered metafictional. "Self-conscious" and "self-reflexive" are often used synonymously, but it is important to note that a text can be self-reflexive (lacking a referent), without being self-conscious. Given this retreat from full "textual self-interrogation," the extent and purpose of metafictional devices must be examined before a novel is considered to be metafiction; "the message in all fully metafictional novels is at least partly that 'art is artifice'."[31]

Because metafiction can be defined as a technique that foregrounds certain elements of a novel which mimetic writing would hide or leave in the background, the metafictional elements of a work can be systematically surveyed to see what part they play in the overall structure of a work. In other words, it is possible to determine the degree of metafictionality of a text by examining the metafictional elements in relation to the practices of mimetic writing. To examine the metafictional methods in the works selected, I will use the chart proposed by Sarah C. Lauzen based on an extension of the one created by Linda Hutcheon in Narcissistic Narrative (1984). The chart is a classification of techniques, not books, and is meant only to describe the ways in which the familiar facets of the classic, well-made realist story are foregrounded, suppressed, distorted or explicitly scrutinized by metafictional strategies.

| | COVERT | | | OVERT |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Overabundance or Exaggeration | Absence or Reduction | Eccentric Execution | Overt self-consciousness |
| DIEGETIC | | | | |
| Narration & Point of View | | | | |
| Content:<br>Plot/Action<br>Characterization<br>Setting<br>Theme | | | | |
| Structure: | | | | |
| LINGUISTIC | | | | |
| Language: | | | | |
| Medium: | | | | |

Hutcheon distinguishes between texts that are overtly self-aware (thematized) and covertly self-aware (structuralized, internalized, or actualized).[32] Lauzen maintains these categories, but subdivides "covert" into "overabundance," "absence," and "eccentric" as the more specific means by which metafictional writers can foreground conventional technique; "overt" refers to the explicit discussion of such techniques. Along the other axis, Hutcheon separates texts which are diegetically self-aware (self-conscious about their narrative processes) from those that are linguistically self-reflective (that concentrate on their own linguistic functioning).[33] Lauzen subdivides the linguistic dimension into "language" and "medium," and the diegetic dimension into, roughly, "narration," "content" (which is further divided), and "structure." This chart, in seeking to define and describe metafictional ~~t~~echniques and to what degree they contribute to a work's "global metafictionality," provides a means to distinguish among the different ways that writers can emphasize different aspects of the processing of language and literature in relation to mimetic discourse.[34]

As already noted, metafiction relies on cultural continuity to achieve significance in the first place, or at the first level. The reader must be aware (or made aware) of the code which metafiction is targeting in order to grasp the point of the work. In the simpler metafictions, the writer does not construct an alternative context, or distinguish between the life of the novel and the life of the world. Simply undermining the referential level lends credence to the author's own frame. Metafiction that is not overtly self-aware is a device, or a mode; because metafiction has some kind of textual referent, it is a second order signifying system like criticism, invoking metalanguage. When metafiction becomes self-conscious, however, the problem then becomes how to re-motivate the transformed text.

Once metafiction has forced the semantic "jump" to a new order of thinking, communication has to be re-established; the metalanguage must reconnect back to the phatic level. The text must restore complicity with the reader at the new level, forging a new link, once the conventions of a certain level of meaning have been transcended. It is in determining the nature of the reconnection that metafictional techniques can become part of, and serve, a number of other literary codes.

Obviously, metafictional devices can be used toward non-self-conscious ends. There can be elements of fictional self-consciousness in works that are otherwise conventionally realistic; these elements can be used in the service of social, moral or psychological realism. Such strategies can be used to create eerie or humorous effects; metafictional "frame-breaking" can even reinforce the realist/symbolic story intent. A minor framebreak (for example, the intrusive authorial commentary found in nineteenth-century fiction) "reinforces the connection between the real and the fictional world."[35] A major framebreak, however, destroys the illusion of reality, exposes "the ontological distinctiveness of the real and the fictional world, [and] exposes the literary conventions that disguise this distinctiveness."[36] By drawing out the relationship between framed and unframed, a text can confuse ontological levels, and thus approach postmodernist attitudes.

It is at this point that metafictional writing participates in the postmodern code: when a text focuses the reader's attention on its own processes of construction in order to force an explicit recognition upon the reader of the narrative codes and metanarratives that construct both "real" and imaginary worlds. By frustrating our conventional expectations of meaning and closure, we are made aware of the mediating processes and codes that surround and create not only the text, but any linguistic construction of "significance." As Waugh puts it, "contemporary reflexivity implies an awareness both of language and metalanguage, of consciousness and writing."[37] Metafictional strategies must go beyond simply subverting literary conventions, and be used to create or illustrate a radical, ontological indeterminacy in order for a text to be both self-conscious and postmodern. Metafiction becomes postmodern when its strategies cross, confuse and destroy ontological barriers, destroying the illusion of referentiality.

The critical questions raised by metafiction obviously lead to metaliterary questions - and to both modernist and postmodernist writing. Metaliterary writing is both a response and a contribution to the sense that reality and history are provisional; there is "no longer a world of eternal verities but a series of constructions, impermanent structures."[38] The materialist, positivist world view is no longer adequate; there does not seem to be a universal order, only different, competing systems, and the fragility of our human ordering is a question now raised by most authors of contemporary fiction.

Metafiction addresses the tension between literature and the world, and therefore leads quite logically into both epistemological and ontological issues. Putting reality into question by demonstrating that any description of reality can be shown to be a construct and therefore liable to deconstruction, leads to the immanent relativity of all knowledge and perception. What we call literature, art, or life are generated only through sets of mediating conventions. When fiction becomes self-aware, we are given a glimpse of the embedded codes, the multiple strata of meaning, with the implication that everything - free will, value, meaning, the words on the page - is illusion! In The Literature of Exhaustion, Barth examines the problem of the relativity of value in art, and addresses the problem of authenticity or artistic integrity. If literary art is not to be merely imitation, an endless recycling of words and archetypal structures, a writer must not only master, but move beyond, previous literary systems in order to find significance. This leads to the postmodern radical indeterminacy: what conventions can we use to question the substantiality of the conventions of our existence? Or rather, after questioning substantiality, and finding only conventions, where are we left?

In the search for substance or significance, the relationship between the signifier and the signified is exposed as utterly arbitrary, which means that meaning, lying somewhere in the intangible relationship between the two, is always deferred, moving us toward an absolute radical skepticism. Can anything be known absolutely, or is it all a questionable human construct? If there is no necessary correlation between information and meaning, then significance is purely relational. If sense/nonsense is defined only by context, rather than some innate, concrete property, then where and how do we draw the line between the meaningful and meaningless? Is interpretation even possible? Calling into question the relationship between the world and the conventions by which the mind knows it, as metafiction does, calls into question knowledge itself. If self-consciousness is taken far enough, it points to an infinity of texts within texts and "the question of the relationship between tale, teller, and world, fades into the question of the relationship between any perceiver and any object."[39] As Margaret A. Rose observes:

> There are only levels of form. There is ultimately only content, perhaps, but it will never be discovered in a natural, unframed state.[40]

There are various artistic strategies that "imply a fiction that self-consciously reflects upon its own structure as language,"[41] but which emphasize different aspects of the same linguistic/creative process. The self-begetting novel, for example, emphasizes the development of a narrator up to the point where he writes the novel. This is certainly self-conscious, but the emphasis is on "the modernist concern of consciousness rather than the postmodernist one of fictionality."[42] There are a number of works which use metafictional strategies to focus on what are essentially epistemological (and therefore, modernist) issues, and the lack of a critical distinction between what McHale calls an epistmological dominant and an ontological (postmodern) dominant has contributed to the conflation of "metafiction" and "postmodern."

Definitions and discussions of metafiction are often taken beyond the formal level:

> Metafictional novels tend to be constructed on the principle of a fundamental and sustained opposition...the construction of a fictional illusion...(as in traditional realism) and the laying bare of the illusion.... The two processes are held together in a formal tension which breaks down the distinctions between ´creation´ and ´criticism´ and merges them into the concepts of ´interpretation´ and ´deconstruction.´[43]

What inflated definitions of metafiction confuse are the different purposes that such a formal strategy can serve. Epistemological and ontological issues are implicit in such a critical definition, and of course, the two are not actually separable:

> Intractable epistemological uncertainty becomes at a certain point ontological plurality or instability.... By the same token, push ontological questions far enough and they tip over into epistemological questions - the sequence is not linear and unidirectional, but bidirectional and reversible.[44]

When metafictional and postmodernist writing are both superficially defined as addressing the "problematic relationship of literature and ´reality´,"[45] metafiction is quite naturally incorporated as a form of postmodernism. When metafiction and postmodernism are thus conflated, it is impossible to discuss works that are metafictional but not postmodern. We cannot simply say that any text that displays the artificiality of convention is postmodern. Self-conscious postmodernism must move beyond the epistemologically oriented self-consciousness of modernism, which is why McHale's distinction between an epistmological dominant in modernism and an ontological dominant in postmodernism is extremely useful. When Alter describes metafictional strategies as "purposeful experiments with form intended in various ways to draw our attention to fictional form as a consciously articulated entity rather than a transparent container of 'real' events,"[46] he is suggesting the epistemological functions such techniques can serve. When Waugh describes "contemporary metafiction" as drawing our attention to the fact that "life, as well as novels, is constructed through frames, and it is finally impossible to know where one frame ends and another begins,"[47] she is addressing an ontological issue. So why not call it "postmodern fiction" instead of "contemporary metafiction"?

A great deal of this confusion has occurred because of the problems of definition and conceptualization that surround the term "postmodernism." Critics use the less controversial term "metafiction" to avoid these problems; it is easier to inflate definitions of metafiction and treat it as a form of postmodernism when discussing self-conscious contemporary writing. As McHale points out, much of the ambiguity is due to the fact that postmodernist literature is often percieved as having only one object of representation, one concept that it demonstrates again and again: the "unreality of reality."[48] This is certainly a recurrent theme, apparent in the postmodernist revisionist approach to history (and historical fiction), but it is not the only one. Postmodernism is above all an illusion-breaking art; "it systematically disturbs the air of reality by foregrounding the ontological structure of texts and of fictional worlds."[49] Such texts "cannot help but be about something," and McHale defends postmodern fiction by arguing that although it is antirealistic, antirealism is not its only object of representation; two of the themes it returns to obsessively are as deeply traditional as one could wish: love and death.[50]

In order to distinguish between metafictional writing and metafictional-postmodernist writing, definitions of metafiction must be restricted to a formal level; self-consciousness is, after all, arguably present in all novels. When the utilization of such devices is integrated into a larger vision of the "dialectic interplay between fiction and reality,"[51] the metafictional devices can raise questions that are essentially ontological, concerning the nature and existence of reality, or epistemological, questioning ways of knowing a reality whose existence is finally not in doubt. These distinctions become necessary when attempting to ascertain the purposes served by metafictional devices; these distinctions also demonstrate that "metafictional" cannot be equated with "postmodern."

Many of the same principles and tendencies that were shaping the direction of postmodern fiction are central to the development of the most important critical schools of the past 25 years: structuralism, poststructuralism, and Marxist-oriented criticism. (The emphasis on the constructedness of human meaning, for example, leads to the postmodern sense that reality is not given and that our way of perceiving it is not natural or self-evident.)[52] Criticism, in this context, both is and examines a "context of expectations" which surround any text. This new critical paradigm (developed partially from the activities in modern epistemology and metafiction itself) exposes the "fictionality of reality" and treats criticism itself as simultaneously critical/fictional. In this view, a text is a human fabrication which human understanding can address, although our methods can never be tested since both ourselves and our understanding are also cultural artefacts. Contemporary criticism reflects this problem, which "confronts us with blank questions about the nature of human speech and about the status of significance."[53]

Current criticism, particularly as it deals with metafiction and postmodernism, can be said to be theoretically self-aware; it acknowledges and struggles with the reductive limits of its own ideological bias. The recognition that "all vision is mediated" results in a critical ambivalence, trying, on the one hand, to serve a necessary purpose, but, on the other, dealing with the sense that to do so will compromise the study as criticism. Self-conscious art/criticism, existing in complex, subversive relation to the social/literary system it addresses, embodies a paradox found in all criticism.

Finally, all criticism and fiction lies somewhere between literature and reality; both exist in "the prison-house of language," meaning, they exist in an entirely self-referential universe. This does not mean, however, that they are entirely approachable or simply artificial, verbal artefacts.

> We can interpret texts because texts use a shared language which refers, however clumsily, to a shared world. We may never exhaust the meaning of a text, or our knowledge even of its textual surface; but to acknowledge that we can never know all is not to decide that we can know nothing.[54]

## III: Covert Metafiction: Wiebe´s Historiographic Metafiction and Hébert´s Discourse of the Unreal

Using the criteria set out in Lauzen´s chart, Rudy Wiebe´s The Temptations of Big Bear and Anne Hébert´s les Fous de Bassan can be classified as examples of covert metafiction. Neither work self-consciously discusses or addresses the self-reflexive elements it contains; the metafictional aspect is internal or actualized. Both writers implicitly focus on the telling of the story, rather than on the story to be told, and their abundant use of autorepresentational devices makes these works unquestionably metafictional. We can count and analyse the metafictional devices used - the degree of metafictionality can be ascertained - but we must also look at the context in which the devices occur and the purposes they serve. Are they being used to make the reader aware of the unnaturalness of conventional literary devices, to call into question or foreground either realist or modernist discourses? Do they represent a true disruption of narrative unity and structure, of the smooth uni-level surface of the referential illusion? In other words, do they represent a break with totalizing metanarratives, giving rise to the radical indeterminacy that is held to be postmodern?

The Temptations of Big Bear and les Fous de Bassan are examples of what Linda Hutcheon calls historiographic metafiction, which "goes beyond asserting its autonomy as language or as narrative...[and] incorporates into its metafictional form the discourses of the past."[1] Both of these texts approach the problems and implications of reconstructing or "writing" the past. Wiebe and Hébert make an interesting contrast because Wiebe focuses on public, supposedly factual history, and Hébert on private, fictional history, yet both are addressing the same question: how do we know the past? How does a past reality come to be storified, sorted out into the significant and non-significant? These are essentially epistemological questions, examining the accessibility and limitations of knowledge and as such, are characteristically modernist. Wiebe's and Hébert's solution is to weigh the past against the present and to weigh oppositional points of view against each other. Both writers address this theme - the creation of meaning - primarily through the use of innovative narrative techniques: there are multiple narrators, voices which become interwoven so that an overall picture emerges that is different from, and yet contains, all of the individual voices. In spite of the innovative narrative techniques and metafictional elements, these works are traditionally modernist in structure and content. Both of these works offer a code or a system by which the fragmentation and disruptions of the narrative unity can be fully resolved and integrated; thus, the metafictional devices serve modernist purposes and express modernist themes.

## The Temptations of Big Bear

Hutcheon defines as historiographic metafiction texts which

> ...self-consciously focus on the processes of producing and receiving paradoxically fictive historical writing... [as] a means of directing our attention to the very processes by which we understand and interpret the past through textuality - in both history and fiction.... Historiographic metafiction is...overtly a form of braided narrative,...disrupting our reading - our creating - of a coherent fictive narrative.[2]

Following Lionel Gossman, Hutcheon argues that "it is not historical reality itself but the present signs of the historian that limit and order the historical narrative" and sees in historiographic metafiction a self-conscious illustration of how "we know reality through texts that recount it, and...pass on our knowledge through other texts."[3] Thus,

> ...historiographic metafiction forces a recognition of a central responsibility of the historian and the novelist: their responsibility as makers of meaning.[4]

Linda Hutcheon calls The Temptations of Big Bear a model of postmodernist historiographic metafiction. Wiebe offers multiple perspectives on his protagonist's actions, a tremendous variety of historical paratexts: treaty extracts, speeches, letters, court records, and then "leaves us to make up our own minds. The loose ends are not tied up neatly - even when the official version of 'history' has claimed they are, or were."[5] What makes The Temptations of Big Bear metafictional is the attention paid to the acts of writing, reading, and interpreting both history and fiction; Wiebe foregrounds this process in order to show that

> ...history, (like fiction) is constructed, systematized and given meaning by its writers and its readers. The past is not coherent, continuous and unified - until we make it so.[6]

It will be seen, however, that The Temptations of Big Bear is only obliquely addressing the implicitly metafictional theme of historiography, the problem of knowing and writing the past. In spite of its many metafictional elements, Wiebe does not entirely leave the loose ends of history or Big Bear dangling; instead, the divergent perspectives and fragments of history presented in the work are unified by the meaning and the message that Wiebe weaves through them.

Wiebe presents the story of Big Bear as an epic tragedy. It dramatizes "the decline of the hero paralleling the decline of his people, the man of peace...caught in a web of violence."[7] The Temptations of Big Bear is primarily an examination of the events leading up to the Frog Lake massacre of 1885, but the focus of the novel is on Big Bear, the last twelve years of his life, and the Plains Cree. The "temptations" to which the title refers are the epic proportions of Big Bear's situation as Wiebe conceives it: with the disappearance of the buffalo, it becomes increasingly necessary, for the sake of his people, to sign a treaty and accept a reservation, although he has the foresight (verified by the reader's hindsight) to distrust the terms of the white treaty. However, the "Worthy Young Men" want to battle the whites, and Big Bear understands that this would be useless; thus, he finds himself increasingly alienated from his people. The unrest erupts into violence at Frog Lake; Big Bear goes to jail for three years, and dies shortly after his release.

Several distinctive aspects of Wiebe's approach to historical fiction emerge from a careful reading of The Temptations of Big Bear. In Wiebe's view, the objective rendering of an historical story is not possible because, as he says in Where is the Voice Coming From?, "I am no longer spectator of what has happened,... I am become element in what is happening at this very moment."[8] Wiebe is thus acknowledging the postmodern premise that subjectivity is irremediably a part of our systems of thought: the observer cannot be separated from the observed. His work is metafictional in its conscious foregrounding of artistic and philosophical questions concerning the relation of history to fiction: how can words, a text, communicate or recreate a valid historical reality? Where is the line between fact and fiction? How can a written "voice" be given to the past, especially since Big Bear lived in an oral culture? Wiebe's implicit emphasis is on the craft of making, and he has said: "All forms of fiction are things made (fiction), in contrast to things done (factum)."[9]

In crafting a blend of history and fiction - contrasting the historical documents with a creative description of several personal realities of the time - Wiebe is approaching a diegetic self-awareness. Foregrounding the making of the story, the narrative processes, comes close to self-consciousness. In TTOBB, Wiebe offers both certain facts and a creative interpretation of them, producing a metafictional self-reflexivity "by this very postmodernist paradox of asserted and then undercut authority."[10] In the fictional world that Wiebe creates, the reader is presented with apparently objective facts and a variety of personal reactions and interpretations of them:

> So David Laird could bump two hundred and eighty-six miles across country to his almost complete headquarters above the Battle River content. He had factual data that would look just fine on the Annual Report, 1877:
>
> The number of Indians paid was as follows:
>
> | | | | | |
> |---|---|---|---|---|
> | Head Chiefs | 10 | at | $25 | $250 |
> | Minor Chiefs and Councillors | 40 | at | 15 | 600 |
> | Men, women and children | 4342 | at | 12 | 52,104 |
>
> Not quite $53,000 for a bit more than fifty thousand square miles of grass and hills. A down payment actually, but complete with rivers, valleys, minerals, sky - everything, forever. Rotting buffalo. (69)

All of the characters are documented participants in the events described, and the temporal and geographical limits are precisely and accurately delineated, from the signing of Treaty No.6 on September 13, 1876 at Fort Pitt to the death of Big Bear on January 17, 1888 at the Sand Hills. The historical, factual level of the story is carefully documented, then elaborated upon and embellished. Wiebe attempts to ask: what did those twelve years of history mean to the people who lived them?

TTOBB is composed of several narrative voices and Wiebe juxtaposes the voices, so that events are seen from the Indian and the white point of view. In addition, there are several narrative forms: written records, oral testimony (sections of pure dialogue), personal diaries, treaty extracts, newspaper accounts, and public speeches. Some of the documents presented are real, some are created, some are a combination of both. Big Bear´s address to the court at his trial, for example, is reconstructed from William Bleasdell Cameron´s summary of it.[11] Meetings and battles are presented from varying points of view, as well as prayers, thoughts, and conversations. There are also sections in italics, representing "the incarnation of white man´s law, the... church, and the Queen,...characteristically impersonal and rigid".[12]

There is a traditional, omniscient narrator in TTOBB, a "journalist/poet," heterodiegetic, "revealing the private truth behind the public event...observing from both within and without his chosen narrators."[13] The journalist/poet´s voice opens the novel and introduces four of the six chapters; this level of narrative contains the other narrative voices and the events of the story. This voice is multi-levelled and unfixed, moving from past to present, fact to opinion, and includes a flow of consciousness Wiebe calls camera-eye internal, "an almost surrealistic intensification of private reality":[14]

> She felt herself becoming again, the farthest tips of her moving out towards the fire until she knew herself too complete to comprehend, too enormous, each unknown part of her vastness she could not yet quite feel but which would certainly surround the whole earth bending back under her. And there was the heat, it rounded her head... reaming the hollows of her head up through the sand that held her body... singing her suspended while Sun devoured her warmer and warmer until she was suffused. Herself; completely; open and radiant. (314)

There are also eight private or individual voices, mainly representing a white point of view. Each moves the story forward in time and meaning; that is, they do not often provide perspectives on the same event. Wiebe is not emphasizing the idea of simultaneity which, as I shall argue, Hébert does. Most are homodiegetic, employing a limited, eye-witness point of view: John McDougall, a missionary, offers a religious point of view; Edgar Dewdney, the Indian Affairs Commissioner, illustrates the political point of view; an anonymous Canadian volunteer presents the military point of view.[15] Kitty McLean, an adolescent, comes the closest of all the whites to being able to understand and respond to Big Bear and the events with the same immediacy, the same "lack of distance between physical and psychological experience" that characterizes those passages representing the Indian's oral world-view.[16]

The complex, polyphonic narrative plays a predominant role; its discrepancies call into question the way any individual or group perceives the world. It is quite difficult to untangle the narrators and to identify them in their relation to the historical events and chronology. This fragmented, divergent perspective creates for the reader the same difficulties and confusion that the characters are faced with; the reader moves about in a fictional realm that has no exact dimensions.

> The white onslaught literally alters reality. Wiebe contrives an intricate narrative pattern through the novel that reveals again and again the unbreachable gap between Indian reality and white. He details its effect, that cannot be fought in a battle, nor confronted even in debate, or by treaty. In having Big Bear perceive them as well Wiebe makes him a suffering prophet ... the burden of fiction and history return to Big Bear to carry and endure.[17]

Big Bear is the dominant voice in the novel, the authoritative consciousness. Of all the characters, he alone seems to see and understand the subtleties and implications of his hopeless situation. For the reader, this level of the narrative and this narrator offer the most comprehensive, imaginative and sympathetic view. Big Bear's credibility is reinforced by his prophecies: what the reader knows by hindsight, Big Bear knows through vision, so that when the narrative focalizes through Big Bear in his vision of the coming of the trains (137) and the future of the prairie measured out into squares, his voice has an added authenticity.

> He saw then that straight lines of stark bleached bones had been spread straight, pressed and flattened into the earth for him to ride over, and sliced into hills as if that broad thong of bone could knuckle them down, those immovable hills. As far as he could see, wherever he looked the world was slit open with unending lines, squares, rectangles, of bone and between the strange trees gleamed straight lines of, he comprehended it suddenly, white buildings. (409)

Wiebe, attempting to replace the white history with a version that places the Indian at the centre, accomplishes this in a relatively traditional way: Big Bear becomes the tragic hero caught in a hopeless situation, the great man made larger than life with a "gigantic voice" that dominates within the novel. (185) To an extent, the voice of Big Bear does write the book, since much that he actually said is included, and Robert Kroetsch has spoken of Wiebe's "uninventing himself back to Big Bear."[18] As Wiebe states in his foreward, however, TTOBB is a personal meditation upon the past, and the predominant voice, the mediating one in the overall narrative structure, is, I would suggest, distinctly that of Rudy Wiebe. Nevertheless, there is a close authorial complicity with the character of Big Bear. As will be discussed later, Wiebe not only creates a hero, but a white version of a suffering prophet - a Christian hero, in Wiebe's terms.

Big Bear has an eloquent simplicity, and the white prose is usually bureaucratic, unimaginative and clichéd; thus, the conflicting attitudes of white and Indian are embodied in language, in distinctive modes of speech. The Indians' speech is generally active, sensual and immediate, employing metaphors drawn from nature, and although there are sections in the book in which the white speech is fairly poetic, it is mostly sterile and prosaic. There is a "basic dissension between White Man and Indian, which conflict is propagated because neither race comprehends the implications informing the language of the other,"[19] and it is this dichotomy, many critics feel, that is the major theme of the book, rather than the implicitly metafictional theme of historiography and the processing of history. The purpose of the shifting perspectives, it can be argued, is primarily to juxtapose the oral, Indian's point of view with the written, white's point of view and really only secondarily to expose the historical discrepancies between any given interpretations of events or facts. "Dialectically, Wiebe has fused the timeless world [of the Indians] with the irruption of history"; Wiebe "makes us identify with the Indians and experience their fatal entry into history through their eyes."[20]

The fundamental conflict which Wiebe portrays is the "tragic (because unavoidable) clash between two irreconcilable ways of looking at human beings and their environment."[21] The relationship between the whites and the Indians emerges on various levels in the novel; historical events are fused with a timeless, oral dimension evoked by Wiebe's integration into the narrative of the camera-eye internal and by his attempt to create a living image of the Indian experience and perspective. Wiebe trys to give a voice to Big Bear's unrecorded, oral tradition and to capture the oral reality of the Plains Cree in written language.

> Wiebe attempts, in a very self-reflexive manner, to capture in print and in fiction a historical character whose essence was his voice. He also had to convey, in written English, the rhetorical and ritualistic power of oral speech.... The novel's textual self-consciousness about this oral/written dichotomy points to the text's ironic realization that Big Bear's dynamic oral presence can only be conveyed to us in static print; the oratorical power that goes beyond words can only be expressed in words and perhaps, the truth of historical fact can only be recounted today in self-consciously novelistic fiction.[22]

As far as is possible within a written medium, Wiebe contrasts the oral tradition of the Indians with the written tradition of the whites by selecting a particular narrative formula to portray the oral tradition. As already mentioned, in the world created by the oral passages, there is a proximity to human life, a subjective immediacy in which Wiebe attempts to come as close as possible to re-creating a living experience, as in his description of Big

Bear's buffalo hunt.

> He was the curl of a giant wave breaking down upon and racing up the good beach of earth. The running hooves drummed him into another country, calling and calling, and it came to him he had already spread his robe on the Sand Hills, the air in his nostrils beyond earth good, the buffalo effortlessly fanned out before him in the lovely grace of tumbleweed lifting to the western wind. The gashed wounds left in the cows' shoulders and flanks by hunters they had once and then again outrun dripped brilliant red in the rhythmic bunch and release of their muscles, simply beautiful black crusted roses in the green and blue paradise of their running. Dust, bellows, shrieks, rifle explosions, grunts were gone, only himself and the bay stallion rocking suspended as earth turned gently, silently under them in the sweet warmth of buffalo curling away on either side. (128)

As discussed in Walter J. Ong's Orality and Literacy (1982), there are profound differences between the way an oral and a literate culture perceive or articulate the world. Briefly, in oral discourse the sensuous and the situational are valued over the abstract. The word is so revered that the word is practically the thing; spoken words evoke the total existential reality of a thing. A written culture, by contrast, can separate the knowing from the known; objectivity and the abstract are valued over empathy. The written imagination sees language only as proposition, never as parable. Big Bear's final words at his trial emphasize the difference between the two visions:

> I have heard your many words, and now you have heard my few. A word is power, it comes from nothing into meaning and a Person takes his name with him when he dies. I have said my last words. Who will say a word for my people? Give

> my people help! I have spoken. (398)

Wiebe addresses this issue, albeit indirectly, by attempting to make the Indian´s oral world sufficiently real through written prose. The opposition between the two ways of "knowing" the world is a central theme of the text, bypassing the question of historical reality or historicity. Wiebe attempts to show that the two linguistic codes cannot meet, but paradoxically, he can only show this by writing it all down against an historical background. There is, thus, a postmodernist impulse in Wiebe´s contrasting of the oral and written traditions, an implicit, ontological questioning of two ways of being in, and consequently, perceiving the world.

> Wiebe shows Indians, not simple or weak, but baffled. Their reality is so entirely different, infused with spirit and necessity, that they have no chance for survival. To grasp his achievement is to realize the spiritual abyss between the two worlds, white and Indian.[23]

If we take as conventional/realist the assumption that

> ...language in fiction should serve as a neutral conduit for the content, (taking content to be something besides language) [and] it should be transparent; it should not call attention to itself or distract us from the real business of the novel (whatever that might be),[24]

then this aspect of the work is certainly metafictional. Using Lauzen´s chart, Wiebe could almost be classified as tending towards overabundance (his rhetorically vivid prose, the flights into the surreal), absence (those sections, such as the courtroom scenes which offer only verbal confrontations and characters reduced to dramatic roles) (21,360), and eccentric execution (the strained and broken syntax). Indeed, Wiebe comes as close as possible to addressing the issue of language quite overtly; he approaches self-consciousness at this level. He explores and emphasizes, as already mentioned, the making of meaning and it could be argued that the power of words, of voice, is one of the themes of this work. "Words are not just sounds" Big Bear warns, and he pleads the court "to print my words and scatter them among White People." (314,400) Yet the spoken word is hardly valued in the white, literate world, and in the end, words are unable to bridge the gap between the white and the Indian reality.

The book ends with a postmodern solution to Big Bear´s dilemma: Big Bear enters "the circle of all that had once been given him" (414) and withdraws into the silence of death. One´s view of the ending determines the final or global interpretation of the book.

In a postmodern reading we are left, after calling into question the white structuring of history, with a myth or model more solid than before. Big Bear enters a mode of being, a world, where we cannot follow; Big Bear cannot get out of his circle, and we cannot get in, except partially, perhaps, through Kitty´s sympathetic consciousness. We do not have the imagination to understand Big Bear, or enter his world, and our exclusion from his circle is the final message. This re-tracing of Big Bear ultimately alienates us from Big Bear, "kills" him, and puts him back into the museum. The final message of the work is that Big Bear is not accessible to us; he disappears into his own mystery/history. The reader comes to the same realization as Kitty, "understanding at last she could not understand him...not in the least." (388) Thus, there is a retrograde movement in Big Bear, a return to silence in which we are only left with writing, a medium of communication which cannot reach Big Bear. This certainly corresponds to the postmodern view of the inability of language to approach "the unpresentable," but is this the overall effect that the novel achieves?

The ending can also be viewed more positively: Big Bear's trail to the Sand Hills is often interpreted as an affirmation of faith in the "Only One" and the land. George Woodcock, for example, feels that Wiebe has created not historical fiction but religious myth, and thus, is taking Big Bear out of his Indian context.

> Big Bear takes on the role of the Christian martyr; like Christ himself, he...clings to a non-violent but fixed moral stance...thus, the least Christian of Wiebe's novels in its overt content is the most powerful in its Christian implications.[25]

Big Bear's situation, as portrayed by Wiebe, is expressed in terms related to certain Christian principles. In

Woodcock's view, Wiebe has been unable to separate the purpose of historical fiction, which is to create a "plausible image and a true feeling of the past," from that of the historical moralist, "which is to apportion blame, signal merit and formulate lessons."[26] Susan Whaley, on the other hand, asserts that Wiebe seeks

> ... to reveal a central human truth which transcends the issue of race.... Wiebe points no accusing finger at either race, hence the appeal of his vision. If the novel is to be seen as a treatise on where the fault lies, Wiebe's answer must be a qualified 'everywhere and nowhere'....[TTOBB] is not an historical or sociological catalogue of events; rather, it is a series of mental flashes which illuminate and transcend the facts.[27]

John Moss also views this work, not as a Christian allegory, or a re-creation of an historical event, but as "a form of transcendence."[28]

> [TTOBB] is an intensely moral novel, yet it is not a moral vision...He endeavours to bind us together with a place, to regenerate community across time, to make the land breathe with the lives of people who have lived on it, to make us responsible each to all.... To achieve so much he may have been morally driven, but the effect is spiritual history.[29]

Even if Woodcock's description of the book as a religious allegory is not accepted, or if the ending of the book is seen as more ambiguous than the comforting closure of the "affirmation of life" described, it is generally agreed that Wiebe is attempting to create a transcending vision that reaches beyond time, place and race and is essentially a

Christian statement about the common humanity of all people.

The final effect of Wiebe's historical/fictive text is the implication that the human meaning is revealed behind the historical facts, the human side of history is made tangible. Wiebe is a didactic writer, and his book reflects his religious perspective; Wiebe himself has said: "I don't pretend that it's a history which is written impartially. It's written in a biased way."[30] Wiebe sees as the ideal for the historical novelist the revelation that occurs when "a truly artistic intelligence subsumes all that fact for us and carries us with it beyond history."[31] In other words, Wiebe uses metafictional techniques to take the reader beyond one frame, denying the objective reality and validity of written history while claiming, however, the transcendental vision of the artist as a means of reaching a greater human and historical truth. The content of this work is material drawn from history, but it is subsumed by the manner in which it is retextualized and rethought. The final vision which informs and unites the whole text is Wiebe's, and, as will be discussed later, this is a modernist, rather than a postmodernist, orientation.

Although Wiebe has argued that "the line between history and fiction is an impossible line anyway,"[32] he has made it clear that part of his purpose was to discover the richness of the unrecognized Canadian historical past; to _recover_ a past, and indeed, "critics obsessed with a lack of Canadian mythology were pleased to claim his book as satisfying the need for one."[33] This directly opposes the postmodern view of history (or at least, the way the deconstructionists view it). Within the postmodern code, a knowledge of true history is impossible; history, like literature, is not part of a knowable reality. In seeking to show the bias and the discursive nature of historical documents, Wiebe is postmodern; he does not, however, really attempt to show or move beyond the bias in his own document/novel. Revealing the processing/creation of history is certainly a postmodern aim, but to "think Indian," the obvious aim of Wiebe's writing, is not. "He convinces the white reader that the Indian perspective makes infinitely more sense than the white view"[34]; thus, he is not reflecting the postmodern distrust of the grand metanarratives - such as Christianity - which legitimize certain ways of perceiving the world. Hutcheon claims that TTOBB is postmodern historiographic metafiction because it calls into question the validity of historicity and because Wiebe is attempting to show how history is distorted and misinterpreted through various discourses. Nevertheless, if Wiebe were writing from a postmodern perspective, he would have wished to demonstrate the impossibility of re-creating any historical reality, and this is obviously not what Wiebe was trying to do.

Wiebe is one of several writers who have focused upon the "marginal" existence of native people in the national mythology, who, "bred of a sense of vast injustice", have transformed "the history of small rebellions into the myth of a dying nation defending itself against impossible odds."[35] Wiebe elevates Big Bear to the level of myth, even, perhaps, a Christian myth, and within the postmodern code, myths are to be debunked, not created. The Temptations of Big Bear may be a model of historiographic metafiction, but it does not reflect a postmodern world view.

There is a variety of metafictional elements in this work and a brief survey, using Lauzen's chart, will illustrate where Wiebe deviates, or does not, from the realist code. TTOBB can be classified as an example of covert metafiction because this work does not explicitly discuss the metafictional elements that it contains; they are implicit. The multiplicity of voices has the effect of foregrounding conventional narratorial technique and from a formal point of view, may be the overriding metafictional element in this book even though there is a traditional omniscient narrator. The plot is relatively conventional; certain events build to an incident and it follows a linear, progressive chronology, but the action is not central or pivotal to the work. We already know what is going to happen; the novel focuses more upon personal and public response to the inevitable progression of history.

The characterization is traditional: there are detailed descriptions of physical appearance and mannerisms, and, as already mentioned, Wiebe presents Big Bear as a tragic hero, larger than life as heroes are supposed to be. The setting is also conventionally realistic: clearly placed, carefully and lyrically described.

On a thematic level, TTOBB can be said to be metafictional in its implicit treatment of both history and orality: Wiebe self-consciously foregrounds the writing - the production - of history, and the gap between a written and a spoken reality. Nevertheless, the main purpose of the book seems to be, more precisely, the building of a myth around the figure of Big Bear, for which purpose the Indian reality of the time is created.

The degree of metafictionality of the structure is debatable; there are no noticeably external or artificial organizing principles, nor is it really a fragmented, semi-disconnected composition. Rather, the structure is determined by the sequence of historical events and the perspectives of the individual characters. There are the paratexts, however, which serve as frame-breaks, as well as the multiple levels of the narrative and Big Bear's visions: the reader knows they will come true, thus, they take the reader beyond the temporal limits of the story. Nevertheless, TTOBB follows the standard realist presupposition that "structure is organic, given by content, and not arbitrarily imposed."[36] The form of the book, adhering to an historical chronology, is dictated by the content. Beyond the multiplicity of voices, each voice remains true to the character it is supposed to represent, and the voices can be seen as serving primarily as ironic contrasts in their context, as the documents are often covertly presented ironically - deliberately made to appear stilted and ridiculous - in order for Wiebe to imply his further and greater truth beyond the fictional frame of the documentary history.

As already discussed, Wiebe shows a self-conscious preoccupation with language, and approaches a metafictional self-awareness in this respect. In the last category, medium, the book is entirely traditional (the printing and pagination), yet Wiebe indirectly addresses the issue of medium by focusing upon the qualities of orality and literacy.

In summary, TTOBB is metafictional in form (the paratexts) and narratorial technique, and on a thematic level it can be said to be metafictional in its implicit treatment of history and the contrasting of the linguistic reality of two cultures. The metafictional impulse takes Wiebe outside of one frame - historical fact or written history - but not beyond Wiebe himself, his vision. Wiebe is attempting to displace one perceived truth using metafictional methods, but at the same time he is replacing it, using relatively realistic methods, with a personal, artistic truth, a totalizing vision which unites the fragmented, isolated pieces of history in the book. The fragmented narrative is unified by Wiebe's message; the text is ultimately coherent and readable. Rather than presenting a dislocated description of an ultimately unknowable reality, TTOBB is - except for Big Bear's withdrawal into an unreachable, unexpressible mode of being at the end - more modern than postmodern in orientation.

Linda Hutcheon considers this book to be postmodern, but Fokkema or McHale would find this book to be modernist: it does not proceed from a framework of radical ontological doubt. The intent of the novel is didactic; in the final analysis, therefore, The Temptations of Big Bear attempts to know and represent a certain reality and treats language and fiction as a referential means of re-entering history and providing personal truths.

## les Fous de Bassan

Anne Hébert employs many of the same metafictional devices that Wiebe uses; however, as in TTOBB, the basic impulse of her work is modern, rather than postmodern. Les Fous de Bassan is similar in form and technique to Big Bear, but where Wiebe imaginatively reconstructs the past in order to create a myth, disrupting the conventional discourses of history to produce a vision of a truer or more human history, Hébert departs from realistic discourse in order to create a psychological realm of "the imaginary and the forbidden," a subterranean level below the "real" events and words of the story.[37] Wiebe and Hébert are similar in their exploration of how we give the past meaning, but Hébert focuses more upon the novelistic world of the self, the inner world, both personal and collective, and how this world affects perceptions and behaviour. Wiebe consciously foregrounds the structuring of historical discourse, the telling of events past; Hébert treats the same process on an individual, personal level. As in Wiebe's work, there is still a referential element, but it is "transgressed, subverted and liberated."[38]

To a greater degree than Wiebe, Hébert emphasizes the central role of language in literature and in creating significance. She has spoken of "le mystère de la parole"[39] and like Wiebe, sees language not as a mimetic tool but a means of creation, a method for discovery and knowledge. She goes beyond Wiebe in testing the limits of the worlds that can be built with language and in approaching "the unpresentable." The world created by Hébert is more ontologically ambiguous than the world of Big Bear, informed as it is by a final authoritative vision of the world that is Wiebe's. Like Wiebe, Hébert's work contains both a social and historical dimension and many details and descriptions reinforce a realistic, referential level, but Hébert also deliberately sabotages and subverts the image of a rational, coherent world, adding another dimension which Janet Paterson calls the discourse of the unreal, "the manifestation of an expanded consciousness, be it personal or collective".[40]

> The poetics of the real is relatively easy to identify, analyse and classify...realistic discourse is highly structured and

> constrained...[we] readily recognize the 'referential illusion'....However, the functioning of the discourse of the unreal - that is, how it works and creates meaning - remains unresolved....It is precisely from the perception of a realistic discourse - where words create what Barthes calls 'un effet de réel'- that a discourse of the unreal is constructed and perceived....In purely abstract terms the unreal simply cannot be defined. But as a structural element in an existing opposition, it can generate the transformation of a sign into a code, thereby producing a meaning of the unreal.[41]

There are, thus, three levels of representation in LFDB: the real, the imaginary/subconscious, and the unreal. The levels are not distinct or self-contained; rather, there is slippage from the the real to the fantastic, from the literal to a constant the figurative.

> ...c'est que dans [LFDB] la structure tripartite du réel, de l'onirique et de l'irréel est gouvernée par deux principes opposés. D'une part, le sens est constamment soumis à la diffraction et à la discontinuité parce que de nombreuses stratégies textuelles viennent perturber l'ordre et la logique discursives. Mais, d'autre part, selon un processus inverse, le sens est aussi continuellement récupéré et réintégré au sein de significations globales et unitaires par le truchement des structures de redondance.... C'est...un texte où le discours fictionnel se déploie dans un mouvement de tension continuelle.[42]

Hébert maintains this constant tension between the real and the fantastic, the conscious and the unconscious, through the representation of antithetical patterns. The text is anchored in the referential, but the logic of the realistic discourse is continually undermined, producing a constant slippage towards the oneiric and the unreal. Inversely, by the repetition of certain structures and details, the referentiality and credibility of the narrative are also constantly reasserted.[43]

Les Fous de Bassan is an enigmatic novel, offering multiple readings. The antinomical organization and the multiplicity of levels are apparent both at the microlevel of detail within the text and in the global structure of the work; LFDB is abundantly metafictional. Hébert creates a self-consciously fictive universe, but, as will be seen, the interplay of the three levels and the numerous self-reflexive structures do not take the novel in a postmodern direction.

It is primarily through her presentation of a discourse of the unreal that Hébert self-consciously undermines the referential illusion and apparently approaches an ontological uncertainty. The fragmentations and dislocations of the unreal are not, however, postmodern in the context of this work. The "unreal" is related to similar concepts such as Todorov's "fantastic," "uncanny," or "marvellous" and thus, is not necessarily postmodern.[44] In LFDB, Hébert constantly juxtaposes and intermingles the real, the dreamlike and the unreal; the levels become blurred and confused, creating a tension at the level of language which forces the reader to read on a different level -- to shift codes.[45] This is similar to the metafictional technique of framebreaking, but it is not the total dislocation of the postmodern code. The fragmentation present in LFDB is matched everywhere, as Paterson notes, by a reaffirmation and reinstatement of the real. Even the voice of the ghost, Olivia de la Haute Mer, contributes to the overall meaning of the text. The unreal still functions at an intelligible level; there is still a possibility of interpreting the unreal as an expression of the subconscious, personal and collective, of the characters. LFDB offers its own code whereby the entire text, even the unreal and fantastic elements, can be understood and read, and this work does not, therefore, reflect the radical indeterminacy that is held to be postmodern. The discourse of the unreal contributes to the metafictional dimension of this work, but the metafictional elements are not created solely by the discourse of the unreal; there are a great many self-reflexive structures in LFDB. Within the context of the rest of the text, however, the self-reflexive structures do not represent a postmodern subversion of the referential illusion.

Hébert depicts the insular and stifling world of Griffin Creek, an imaginary colony on the Gaspé, founded by four families of American Loyalists.

> Trop près les uns des autres. Ces gens-là ne sont jamais seuls. S´entendent respirer. Ne peuvent bouger le petit doigt sans que le voisin le sache. Leurs pensées les plus secrètes sont saisies à la source, très vite ne leur appartiennent plus, n´ont pas le temps de devenir parole.(30-31)

The pivotal event in the story is the disappearance on the night of August 31, 1936, of two cousins, Nora and Olivia Atkins, which leads ultimately to the death and dispersal of the community. There are resemblances to a murder mystery - a favourite form for metafictional subversions of the realist code - and the reader is given six different versions of the events of the summer of 1936. It is not entirely certain who the murderer is in spite of what seems to be a clear-cut confession, but the solution that Hébert offers is that "the distinction between guilt and innocence is irrelevant. All the inhabitants of Griffin Creek are guilty and innocent of the same desire, the same hypocrisy, the same bad and good faith".[46] The society is as guilty as the killer it seeks to protect.

> In a now-familiar but ever-renewing Hébertian scenario, sensual/sexual obsessions and their inevitable composites of inner fear and fascination take the outer forms of domination and death, or suffering and silence, or submission and dispossession. Here the author assigns destructive power to the male characters, humiliation to female characters, but suppressed passions and overwhelming feelings of guilt and discontent haunt all of them. A brooding pessimism, a sense of helplessness and hopelessness invades the entire book, in which characters seek havens of peace whereas none can exist, or concoct cosmologies to fill the voids left by daily reality.[47]

The characters in the novel are driven by their own natures and by their environment, but also, primarily, by the past. They attempt to reconstruct and understand their own histories and come to terms with the murder and its consequences for their lives. Much of the ambivalence of the novel is created by the characters' "constant seesaw between the expressed and the repressed, fact and phantasm, faced as they are with their own instability and the chaos of the world about them."[48] The wind and the sea exert a mystical, semi-hostile influence upon the isolated little village, and for the inhabitants, "life appears as an exercise in ultimate powerlessness and disintegration,...a threatening imminence rather than...[a] secure state of immanence."[49]

Les Fous de Bassan deals essentially with two time periods: the summer of 1936 and the present (1982). The events of the fateful night of August 31, 1936 when the two young cousins disappeared are continually dwelt upon, the object of numerous analepses and prolepses.[50] All of the characters/narrators continually approach and withdraw from the night of August 31; the reader is given only tantalizing glimpses of the fateful night, partial scenes.

As in Wiebe's work, there is an interweaving and juxtaposition of narrative voices with corresponding variations in style and a continuous shift in perspective. The multiple narrators tell most of their stories in the first person, offering the reader multiple focalizations. The five narrators more or less repeat the same story, which creates, with their similarities and dissimilarities, an effect of both fragmentation and verisimilitude. The structures of redundancy lend an air of authenticity to the stories, reinforcing the referential level, while the inclusion and intrusion of a fantastic, "unreal" discourse subverts the logic of the writing of the real.[51]

The narrators are both intradiegetic and extradiegetic, narrators in the first degree, but they also move from autodiegetic to homodiegetic (still in the first person but essentially filling in parts of another's story). The narrators even mimic the traditional omniscient, heterodiegetic mode, employing the third person plural and the neutral voice: "Notre angoisse avec lui atteint un paroxysme difficilement supportable," (153) and "S'il vient quelque chose encore ce sera du côté de la mer." (181) Hébert does not entirely deny person (or voice) as much as some postmodernist works, but there is a "variable or floating relationship" between the narrator, the other characters, and the events related.[52] This has the effect of confusing the linearity of the narrative, and "the fiction loses its specificity of fiction."[53]

In TTOBB, events are located consecutively in time and space, although Big Bear looks into the future in his visions and several other characters muse upon events past. In Hébert's work, there is a combination of precise dates and descriptions of place, explicitly situated in the real, with time segments that are non-sequential, fantastic, and mnemonic, multi-leveled dimensions in both time and space. There is both a linear, chronological, referential level and a circular, achronological, subjective level: the letters of Stevens are carefully dated, for example, while Olivia's narration is set outside of time, "sans date." The story oscillates between the present and the past, revolving around an event and a time, summer 1936, which had a profound effect on the lives of the characters.

> ...la pluralité temporelle romanesque dans les Fous de Bassan a partie liée avec une pluralité des récits, d'où une polyvalence narrative. Ces deux pluralités renvoient à une troisième, celle des narrateurs, chacune des six parties du roman étant le (voire les) récit(s) d'un personnage-narrateur (qui a aussi un statut d'actant dans le ou les récit(s) qu'il narre) racontant de son point de vue une époque, des personnages et des événements racontés ailleurs.[54]

The fusion of time, space and voice - transcending the temporal and spatial dimensions of the narrative - subverts the referential illusion, and creates "one atemporal literary dimension."[55] The characters and events are superimposed in this textual dimension which forces a recognition upon the reader of an explicitly fictive discourse and which produces, on a structural level, a code of the unreal.[56] This work cannot be read on a literal, realistic level, because there is a progressive distortion and loss of the real. The effect of defamiliarization generates the transition from one code to another, from the literal to the figurative, from the real to the unreal.

> Time and time again, through the repetition of seemingly irrelevant details,...the reader is projected into another time and space - atemporal, fictive and mnemonic; a time (and space) which serves in the end to subvert the very notion of reality.[57]

The first section, "Le Livre du Révérend Nicolas Jones," is set in autumn, 1982 corresponding to the date of the publication of the novel. Jones´ bitter reminiscences upon the dying town´s bicentennial celebrations provide a conventionally referential historical background and setting. In the first few pages of the Reverend Jones´ "book," however, realistic discourse gives way to a "stream of unconsciousness...where memories, dreams and hallucinations intermingle and become confused,"[58] immediately suggesting to the reader two possible levels of narrative, held in tension. He speaks of "créature de songe hantant Griffin Creek depuis la nuit des temps" (16) and in the first of many intertextual references, states that "leurs père et mère [avaient] désiré très tôt les perdre en forêt" (19). The world of Griffin Creek is a stagnating, repressed world and the repression, as it quickly becomes clear, is of sexual desire. Jones slips into the third person to talk about the events of 1936, emphasizing his shame, his attempt to deny his sexual attraction to his nieces, Nora and Olivia Atkins. His story swings between the past and the present, dream and memory.

> Bousculant toute chronologie, s´inventant des grandmères et des soeurs à foison, les jumelles découvrent le plaisir de peindre...Trois têtes de femmes flottent sur un fond glauque, tapissé d´herbes marines, de filets de pêche, de cordes et de pierres. Trois prénoms de femmes, en lettres noires, sont jetés de-ci de-là, au bas des tableaux, en haut, à droite, à gauche, ou en travers, se mêlent aux herbes folles, s´inscrivent sur un front blême ou se gravent, comme une balafre, sur une joue ronde. Nora,

> Olivia, Irène, en lettres moulées, brillantes, se répètent,...Pour ce qui est de la guirlande d'un noir de charbon, patiemment travaillée et déroulée, tout le long de la plinthe, il suffit de se baisser et d'être attentif pour reconnaître des chiffres, toujours les mêmes, liés les uns aux autres, en un seul graffiti interminable: 1936193619361936193619361936. Plus bas, en caractères plus petits, une seconde ligne, aussi régulière et obstinée, tout d'abord indéchiffrable: étéétéétéétéétéété. (16-17)

The painting is a mise-en-abyme, depicting the world on the seashore which Hébert creates and actualizing the shift from the literal to the figurative. The description of the painting expresses the major themes of creativity, the opposition between men and women, lost innocence, violence, alienation, and sorrow.

The second section, "Les Lettres de Stevens Brown à Michel Hotchkiss," is set in 1936 and the narrator also occasionally lapses into the third person. This section is ostensibly in the form of letters, again reinforcing the realistic level, but the narratee is rarely addressed. It is primarily autodiegetic but often takes on the form and the tone of an omniscient narrator as Stevens gives his jaundiced view of the town and its inhabitants. He despises it, but is drawn to his two young cousins. Stevens, ostensibly the murderer, wants to escape from his identity and Griffin Creek.

> 23 juillet.
>
> Etre quelqu'un d'autre. Ne plus être Stevens Brown, fils de John Brown et de Bea Jones. Il n'est peut-être pas trop tard pour changer de peau définitivement, de haut en bas et de long en

> large...´Ne pas laisser la suite de mon histoire à Griffin Creek se dérouler jusqu´au bout. Fuir avant que.... (79-80)

The passage quoted above contains an example of the prolepses which, while serving to heighten the suspense, also disrupt the realistic code or level: how could Stevens, on July 23, possibly "run away before ..." the events of August 31 - an event still in the future? More importantly, however, these breaks create an emotional tension: what happened at that central moment of the narrative? Stevens´ section ends on the night of August 31, while he is bailing out his boat, waiting for the girls.

The third part, "Le Livre de Nora Atkins," is autodiegetic and like the story of Nicolas, is characterized by a discourse that combines the real and the fantastic and again subverts the logic of the referential discourse. The reader is given another description of the events of the summer of 1936. "Nora´s version, the most direct, vital, unencumbered of the three, reflects with fairly simple and repetitive sentence structures her joy in a newly found sexuality."[59] Nora speaks of a theoretical future: "un jour ce sera l´amour fou,.... nous serons mari et femme, roi et reine, pour l´éternité" (120). She also reminisces about a previous life, taking the narrative beyond realistic temporal limits. The language of this narrative fragment is poetic and lyrical, and it is textually implied and critically agreed that Stevens kills her because she openly and joyfully expresses her sexuality; Stevens must "punish" her for her rejection of the traditional, passive female role.[60]

The fourth and largest section, "Le Livre de Perceval Brown et de quelques autres," is set in 1936. Perceval is the village idiot, yet he seems to have the human qualities that the others do not. Perceval´s narration is disjointed, a lyrical, interior monologue that produces "nouns, verbs, onomatopeic interjections...a chain of words - linked by free association of ideas":[61]

> Lentement. Sans bruit. Main trop grosse. S´appliquer. Faire très attention. Main lourde. Comme gonflée. La poignée fraîche dans ma main. Tourne doucement. Fait clic. Retiens mon souffle... Par le nez, par la bouche. Fretch, fretch, gr, gr, gr. (139)

In addition, there are passages told in a combination of first person (plural) and third person by a seemingly omniscient narrator; this voice is the voice of the people, the collective voice of the town which ironically mimics the traditional authoritative narrator:

> Nous les gens de Griffin Creek, devancés par les événements, ne pouvant plus suivre, bouleversés par la disparition de Nora et d´Olivia, n´ayant pas le temps de faire entre nous les recoupements nécessaires, mis en face de la police et sommés de répondre, sans avoir le temps de se consulter et de réfléchir. (157)

The voice of Perceval, aware, suffering and searching, alternates with that of the voice of the town:

disapproving, denying, and hostile to the intrusion of the police, the outsiders. Again, there is a blurring between the real and the imagined; Perceval and the others give a doubled view of the events immediately following the disappearance of the cousins and "the whole machinery of justice is questioned through the lucid vision of the idiot."[62] The effect of separate voices, each offering a fragment, is repeated or redoubled within Perceval's "book." This section also contains micro-fragments - a single sentence - and many semi-disconnected short takes; it is another mise-en-abyme, contrasting the innocent vitality of Perceval with the repressed and repressing voice of the collective authority.

The fifth narrative fragment is titled "Olivia de la Haute Mer, sans date." It is told from beyond the grave and extends outside of time. With the narrator/ghost, Hébert transcends the parameters of the world of Griffin Creek, "thereby integrating the fiction into an explicitly fictional discourse."[63] Olivia alternates between the past and her "vie présente," and to an even greater degree than any of the other narrators, Olivia speaks of the murder - her murder - in the third person.

> J'ai beau me répéter qu'il est neuf heures trente, à la grande horloge de Maureen, et qu'il n'est encore rien arrivé, le soir du 31 août, je vois distinctement deux filles qui marchent sur la route dans la nuit blanche de lune. Un garçon les attend au bord de la route, posté comme une sentinelle. Bientôt filles et garçon ne feront plus qu'une seule ombre compacte, noire, sur le sol clair. (224)

There is another voice in this section, the voice of the "femmes passées" who do not speak directly; Olivia repeats their words: "Mon Dieu il ne fallait pas disent-elles toutes dans l'ombre et le vent, les mères et les grand-mères alertées." (215) This other voice is plural and is not associated with any specific character; it is the voice of the women in the wind. Unlike Nora, Olivia listens to the warnings of these other voices; she is not forward but proper, dutiful, and reticent. However, her fate is the same; the advice of the women in the wind does not protect her; Stevens' desire dooms her. Olivia seems to bear no malice for her murder, but avoids the beach and the night of August 31, using her "power" to slip away from the beach at "the speed of the wind." (224) "She has gained eternity by becoming a sea creature.... yet her unappeased desire still returns with the tide and the wind to recall her joyous youth."[64]

Only in the last section, "Dernière Lettre de Stevens Brown à Michael Hotchkiss," set in 1982, is there an actual description of the murder, told from the point of view of Stevens, the ostensible murderer. Again, the narratee is only briefly addressed. Stevens changes to the present tense to tell about the rape/murder and re-lives it, showing us what happened: the savage, repressed inner world supersedes the rational, outer world; the inhibited subconscious can only express its desires through violence.

Tous vont insister sur le calme de la nuit,

> l'absence de vent. Et moi j'affirme avoir éprouvé la rage de la tempête dans tout mon corps secoué et disloqué, tandis qu'Olivia se débattait, partageant avec moi le même ressac forcené. (246)

Stevens is acquitted for the murder in spite of his confession and there is no real punishment for his crime. Nevertheless, he is haunted by visions of the girls and by memories of Griffin Creek and is, at the end of the book, contemplating suicide.

As in TTOBB, the ending is ambiguous; there are no clear patterns drawn of cause and effect, no resolution, no working out of guilt and punishment. We are left, finally, with two male characters in 1982 - Nicolas and Stevens - confused, miserable and essentially unchanged, still attempting to understand the murder and its consequences. The ending is most often interpreted as reflecting Hébert's feminist concerns: Nora and Olivia are killed "by the male who fears their very femininity and their assertion of it," and the admonishing voice of the "femmes passées" is seen as reflecting and articulating a feminist ideology.[65] Given this interpretation, however, the conclusion offers a very pessimistic comment on the relationship between men and women: Hébert's message seems to be that the desires in women are healthy, sane, and life-oriented; in men, the desires are egotistical, sadistic and death-oriented.[66]

> Pourtant, dans ce choc de deux désirs, le féminin et le masculin, la force (mais non point le droit) paraît être du côté de celui-ci.[67]

Thus, this work is usually interpreted as a condemnation of a chauvinistic and insular society, illustrating the consequences of sexual repression on male and female relations. This is a naive reading, however, which really only addresses the literal level of the novel and ignores a great deal.

Hébert breaks away from the realistic code, first and foremost, in order to give form to an aesthetic vision which can contain the opposite and the irreconcilable: within the text, Hébert attempts to create a world where fragmentation and redundancy, the unreal and the real can coexist.[68] Thus, there are two organizing principles which facilitate the combination of the real, the oneiric and the unreal: "la répétition renforce le registre du réel alors que la fragmentation, par une logique qui lui est propre, permet au discours de s´orienter vers le fantasmatique et l´irréel."[69] In LFDB,

> ...on s´aperçoit qu´une certaine unicité se dégage de la pluralité, qu´un ordre émerge de ce désordre et qu´une cohérence surgit au sein même de l´incohérence. Paradoxalement, le sens du texte est à la fois unitaire et pluriel, éparpillé et centré; il est un lieu où de nombreuses structures de redondance produisent une convergence du sens à travers et au-delà de la fragmentation."[70]

Although there are five different versions, each tells essentially the same story; in spite of the fragmentation, there is a constant return to the same themes of desire, violence and repression which provide a cohesive principle, the unifying thread in LFDB.

Hébert balances the real and the unreal, and she adds another dimension with the oneiric/subconscious: the depiction of the subjective, internal world of a Jungian subconscious, both personal and collective, by means of which she can examine the effects of this world on perception and behavior. Again and again, within the text, the characters struggle to communicate and reconcile their "savage inner life" with the repressive superconscious of Griffin Creek. Although the prolepses, for example, imply inconsistency at the level of the narrative, this realm - the psychological realm of the characters - is never disrupted. The characters are unable to escape, control, or understand the subconscious, irrational realm.

Hébert created a psychological "reality" in which to explore human relationships and behaviors and secondly, sought to express the problems of both human and literary communication. There is, therefore, an obvious preoccupation with creativity and language which reflects a self-conscious orientation but which is subordinate to her exploration of the interior lives of the characters. Hébert depicts a Jungian (archetypal) subconscious which reflects the myths of a society in order to illustrate the danger of, and damage to, the self in a closed, repressive society. The struggle to understand a fragmented, irrational self, to gain insight and to integrate that self is characteristically modernist; the postmodern self is ultimately unknowable and uncontrollable. There is, in postmodern fiction, a loss of self: character is reduced to perception without interiority.[71] "The Self,...following the intuition of Nietzsche, is really an empty ´place´ where many selves come to mingle and depart."[72] The characters in LFDB, although emotionally handicapped, do not lack interiority.

Thus Hébert, like Wiebe, has a more modern than postmodern orientation, but she comes closer than Wiebe to self-consciousness, to creating an explicitly metafictional discourse. There is a greater variety of self-reflexive forms in her work.

The authorial manipulations of point of view and voice forces a recognition on the reader of how the narrative levels are created and foreground the functioning of fictional writing. The struggles of the characters to communicate within the book and the varying narrative techniques employed to communicate this struggle reflect the creative process of writing. The text also gives several metaphors of its own functioning, expressing the notion of creativity: the "letters" and "books" of the characters,for example, and the frequent use of the mise-en-abyme. The many intertextual allusions to folktales, Hébert´s other works, Rimbaud, the Bible, Hans Christian Anderson´s "The Little Mermaid," Shakespeare, Cixous, and Faulkner (Perceval may be seen to be modelled upon Benjamin in The Sound and the Fury, just as Stevens may be to Joe Christmas in <u>Light in August) focus the reader's attention on the fabrication and literariness of the text and "converge to create a textual reflection of literary and imaginary discourse."[73]

Hébert's discourse of the unreal, as already noted, shifts the narrative discourse (which forces the reader to shift codes) into an explicitly fictive and figurative literary dimension. Within the first few pages of the novel, the real is diverted, and most noticeably in "Olivia de la Haute Mer," finally subverted. The discourse of the unreal also, however, subverts the image of a rational, coherent, and understandable world. The fictional universe of LFDB appears to be ontologically uncertain, reflecting the entropy and ultimate inaccessibility of a postmodern world model. Explanations and logic are useless in the ambivalent world of Griffin Creek; there are no metanarratives, from the point of view of the reader, to explain the murder and its consequences. In emphasizing the indeterminate nature of the world and the characters' inability to communicate, Hébert's novel is certainly reflecting a postmodern attitude. As with Wiebe, however, one must ask if these postmodern elements are consistent in the context of the rest of her novel. It could perhaps be argued that in Olivia de la Haute Mer and the voice of the "femmes passées," Hébert comes close to improvising a possible world, an ontological projection of an imaginative mode of being. But if Stevens' diegetic confession is to be believed, his telling of the murder, the "solution" reflects an epistemological process or logic. As with Wiebe, one must ask what purpose the postmodern ambiguities serve in this context. Stevens remains unpunished and unenlightened; how, then, does his detailed, poetic and intensely emotional description of the rape/murder fit into the structure of the rest of the text? Is this an ontological projection of a possible reality or is it an epistemological representation of what really happened?

In subverting the image of a rational world, the discourse of the unreal serves primarily to enhance the referential depiction of the subconscious and irrational realm. Hébert is illustrating the negative effects of entropy, how a closed society will destroy itself from within and, perhaps, how the inner self cannot be repressed or denied. The work is an examination of the interior, emotional lives of the characters and the fragmented narrative, the separate lives and minds of the characters, and even the discourse of the unreal are united and interpretable in this psychological dimension.

In summary, LFDB is metafictional in form (the self-reflexive structures and the discourse of the unreal) and narratorial technique, and on a thematic level is metafictional in its constant undermining - and therefore foregrounding - of the discourse of the real. The text is also metafictional in its self-conscious preoccupation with the processes of creativity, communication and language. However, Hébert is subverting and displacing the realist code in order to portray a psychological reality, not to focus on the impossibility of knowing any such reality. Thus, although the world of Griffin Creek, the context in which the characters operate, seems to be an ambivalent, hostile, indifferent and postmodern world, the world of the characters themselves - which is never violated - is ultimately modernist.

Using Lauzen's chart to survey the metafictional elements of this work, LFDB can be classified as covert metafiction. Although the characters within the story muse on how to tell about the murder and how to understand and recreate the past, there is no explicit discussion of the story at the level of the narrative. As in TTOBB, the most noticeable metafictional feature is the narrative technique: there is an overabundance of narrative levels and modes.

> Ce qui frappe, outre la multiplicité des points de vue, c'est une pluralité "intra-narrateur". Par là, nous entendons que chaque personnage-narrateur, s'exprimant le plus souvent comme narrateur autodiégétique, décrit ou analyse parfois un autre personnage en focalisation interne, s'exprimant alors comme s'il était un narrateur hétérodiégétique. C'est le cas, par exemple, de Stevens Brown, qui décrit et raconte d'abord tout le village, ... comme s'il était le narrateur omniscient traditionnel."[74]

Of course, the omniscience attributed to each character is often mistaken: Stevens completely misunderstands Nora and Olivia, for example, but the result is a "dédoublement du personnage" and an expansion of the abstract world of the characters; the characters become both subject and object within the text.[75] The interplay of the voices offers three levels: the real, the imaginary/subconscious, driving and ultimately superseding the real, and the level of the unreal. The levels are not distinct or self-contained; they overlap, but as already discussed, this technique primarily enhances the depiction of the subjective, inner world of perception and only secondarily self-consciously emphasizes the articulation of fictional writing.

Although the entire book revolves repetitiously around a single incident, the plot is not what motivates this story. LFDB could possibly be seen as tending towards an absence or reduction of plot: the same story is told five times and the narrative continually approaches the night in question from a variety of perspectives but stops short, until the last few pages, of an actual description of the murder. It seems quite apparent that the murderer is Stevens, yet his confession leaves many questions unanswered.

The characterization and the setting are traditionally realistic: carefully, clearly and fully described. There are ample descriptions of physical appearance and mannerism; the characters are unaware of their fictional status.

The theme of this work is implicitly metafictional: the discourse of the unreal and the numerous self-referential elements constantly undermine the discourse of the real, and the text self-consciously reflects the processes of literary communication and creativity. Nevertheless, the effect of the real is also constantly re-created and recuperated; the theme of fictionality, while present, is secondary to the exploration of character and behavior, of a human reality.

The structure of the work is explicitly metafictional; related but nonsequential sections offer different points of view on the same action. Whose version of the truth is to be believed? The structure of the work suggests infinite variations. In form, there are many similarities to the detective novel: the crime, the suspects, the alibis, the motives, the solving of the murder delayed until the last few pages of the text. LFDB is a parodic imitation of the detective novel and the early nouveau roman. Again and again, we approach the night of August 31, but not until the last few pages do we hear and see what happened - from a patient whose reliability may be questioned, since he has been insane for thirty seven years.

Hébert does not often or noticeably disrupt the rules of prose, but she goes further than Wiebe in approaching "the unpresentable." Language cannot entirely reach or control the ambivalent universe she creates. Perceval, who sees and understands more than any of the other characters, is unable to express himself. "Quant à Perceval, G. Poulin a bien parlé de celui 'dont le désir dépasse les limites et la mesure du langage et ne sait éclater qu'en cris insoutenables.'"[76] The shrieking and crying of the birds is a repeated image, and Hébert emphasizes, again and again, the inability of the characters to express themselves. To an even greater degree than Wiebe, Hébert is linguistically oriented, reflecting a self-conscious preoccupation with the limits of language.

Janet Paterson describes this text as postmodern because she equates "self-representational" with postmodern: "C´est en effet par le reflet du texte dans le texte et, ainsi, par une subversion partielle du paradigme référentiel que l´écriture hébertienne participe à une esthétique qu´on appelle aujourd´hui ´postmoderne.´"[77] As discussed in the second chapter of this thesis, however, a text can be self-referential without subverting or dislocating its own referentiality and narrative structure - in other words, without being postmodern.

Hébert, like Wiebe, is not offering or aiming for an authentic, precise reconstruction, and both of these texts deliberately foreground and expose their own artificial, constructed nature. Wiebe and Hébert can be described as metafictional and self-reflexive, but are they postmodern?

Given that both texts contain a number of elements that reflect a modernist orientation, McHale´s distinction between the ontological dominant of postmodernism and the epistemological dominant of modernism is useful here. It is possible to define both of these works as typically modernist using McHale´s terms. He identifies as epistemological and modernist such themes as

> ...the accessibility and circulation of knowledge, the different structuring imposed on the ´same´ knowledge by different minds, and the problems of the ´unknowability´ or the limits of knowledge. [These themes are] foreground[ed]

> through the use of characteristically Modernist (epistemological) devices: the multiplication and juxtaposition of perspectives, the focalization of all the evidence through a single 'centre of consciousness'... variants on interior monologue...and so on.[78]

The withdrawal into silence at the end of TTOBB is postmodern; Big Bear enters a mode of being where we, with words, cannot follow. In LFDB, also, the discourse of the unreal apparently subverts the image of a rational, coherent world. Both Wiebe and Hébert seem to approach ontological questions, comparing ways of perceiving or being in the world. In both texts, however, the narrative fragments can be ultimately integrated and fully interpreted; the texts, in other words, offer a means of ordering and understanding themselves: a characteristically modernist feature.[79] In Wiebe's novel, the thread that ties the work together is Wiebe's Christian/artistic vision. In Hébert's novel, the unity is provided by the psychological dimension, the "unreal" world of fantasy and imagination.

The ambiguities of both of these works points out how we as readers desire and create both significance and closure. Both writers self-consciously build, rather than describe, a world with language, but the elaborate narrative artifice of their novels ultimately contributes to a modernist version of moral and psychological realism. Neither work truly proceeds from or manifests a framework of radical ontological doubt. The Temptations of Big Bear and les Fous de Bassan contain a number of metafictional elements, but they are both more modern than postmodern in orientation.

## IV: Overt Metafiction: Inside Beaulieu and Outside Bowering

The next two works to be considered represent a very different type of approach to literary self-consciousness. Les Grands-pères by Victor-Lévy Beaulieu and A Short Sad Book by George Bowering are overtly both metafictional and postmodern; both texts explicitly address the ontological foundation of their own existence and actively engage the reader as a necessary participant in the narrative act. The reader is required to complete the text, rather than passively being shown the text, and the author is present - visible - in a way that neither Wiebe nor Hébert are. As in the work of Wiebe and Hébert, the central role of language as the means by which meaning is created is asserted, but to a greater degree than Wiebe or Hébert, these writers seek to destroy the illusion that language is referential, and assert, instead, the materiality of the act of writing. Each work is centered on the fiction-making process itself and self-consciously declares itself as artefact. The focus is on the mechanics of creativity far more than on the results of the writing (the historical, social and psychological questions that are addressed by Wiebe and Hébert, for example) yet the self-conscious, ontological uncertainty in these works manifests itself very differently.

Both Bowering´s and Beaulieu´s texts are truly postmodern: the fictional worlds created in these works are ambiguous and partial, and there is no totalizing pattern or vision offered that unites the disparate elements. Both of these works offer the complete dislocation of narrative boundaries, structure and unity that is held to be postmodern. Interestingly, however, these works differ greatly in their metafictional techniques. Bowering´s text explicitly dramatizes the reader, the writer, and the traditions of literary realism. Unlike Wiebe and Hébert, Bowering does not use these devices toward a non-self-conscious end; he discusses and deconstructs a number of literary conventions, particularly those of modernism. In Beaulieu´s text, by contrast, there are relatively few overtly self-reflexive structures, yet the dominant thrust of the work is explicitly self-conscious. As readers, we are constantly being reminded that we are participating in a process, "that any message comes to us via processing of language by both author and reader."[1]

The metafictional premise that "art is artifice" is a central theme in both of these works. Bowering and Beaulieu make an interesting contrast because although both writers focus on the same issues, Bowering achieves his effects by an overt, authorial presence, a kind of intrusive, continuous observing over the shoulder of the reader reading, while Beaulieu does the opposite. His book is marked by a distinct, overt absence - not of the author, precisely, but of any level of authorial or narratorial reliability. Bowering's text is metafictional because of a variety of disruptions of the referential discourse: authorial interruptions, questions, jokes, book reviews of the book and so on, that continually disrupt the reading of the book, destroying the referential illusion. Beaulieu's text is metafictional because of an absence of certain things expected of a text - a discourse that is anchored at some level of referentiality - which also, therefore, disrupts the reading and the creating of a coherent context. Beaulieu "reconstructs the deconstructed universe"[2] with the reader inside; Bowering repeatedly forces the reader "out" of the text by collapsing the narrative; the reader is thrown back into the reality of one's self, reading.

## *les Grands-pères*

*Les Grands-pères* requires multiple readings in order to grasp the book. The fictional world that the narrative presents resists interpretation and is extremely confusing and ambiguous. Most of the story ostensibly "unfolds itself inside [an] old man's head, a narrative as disorderly (in terms of chronology) as his white hair,"[3] yet even this level of the text - reading it as an old man's rambling and confused stream of consciousness - is ultimately violated. The protagonist, Milien Bérubé, is a member of the Beauchemin family, and the grandfather of Jos Connaissant and Abel Beauchemin, both novelists. These "writers" have written all of Beaulieu's novels and they are also "in the process of writing all those that Beaulieu is announcing in advance."[4]

> The degree of difference between the real and fictional authors is sometimes nonexistant, at other times rather large; indeed, the process becomes even more convoluted as Beauchemin recognizes the extent to which all the characters _he_ has created are in some ways merely portrayals of aspects of himself.[5]

LGP is, therefore, a part of the larger saga of the Beauchemin family, which Abel Beauchemin (in Beaulieu's other works) has long planned to describe in _la Grande Tribu_. These texts "exist as a kind of Chinese box of fictions, a potentially infinite regression of imaginings imagined,"[6] which is, of course, a recurring postmodern image: multi-layered symbols such as mirrors, palimpsests, and the mise-en-abyme express the notion of a multiplicity of frames or levels as opposed to any discriminating singularity.[7] The characters reappear in many of the books, and, with the intermingling of past and present, real and dream, and indeed, authors, "it is often impossible to determine on what level of reality a given episode takes place."[8] Thus, it can be assumed that the narrator of LGP is Jos Connaissant, attempting "to delve into his grandfather's mind... to return to the origins of his family, their rural environment, their desires and beliefs, their attachment to their animals."[9] The textual evidence for this is one passage near the end of the book:

> (Cela ne pouvait plus être une histoire, à peine un viol d'où la douleur finirait par s'exclure quand le temps, fatigué du grossissement de son ventre, se laisserait aller à la dérive. Il n'y avait donc aucun motif d'inquiétude malgré l'écriture des faits. Rien n'avait lieu que dans l'esprit de quelqu'un immobile devant la tasse de café froid, un livre inactuel devant les yeux. Et pourquoi, finalement, aurait-il fallu écrire dans l'ailleurs des Miliens et d'une grosse femme assise avec majesté sur son pot?) (125)

It is in this passage that most critics find an ontological foundation for the rest of the work: the entire text is assumed to be Connaissant's attempt at projecting the reality of the old man, at reproducing his consciousness and his world. The rest of the text, therefore, cannot be read on a literal level; there are really a number of frames in this work, and the work itself is framed by Beaulieu's other works. This passage frames the level of narrative which contains the old man's story, which is, thus, a story within another story which is part of the other stories in Beaulieu's entire literary production.

The narrative is in the third person, predominantly from the point of view of Milien, but the reader also enters into the consciousness of Milienne, his second wife, at the beginning of the novel, Milienne, his first wife, (79-81), Chien Chien Pichlotte, a friend, (112), and an anonymous doctor, (151-153). The consciousness of Milien is far from clear: age and sickness have left "great black holes" in his mind and his memory; the narrative is morbid, incoherent and ponderous. In addition, there are many passages which seem to be a kind of metatext, commenting and philosophizing, the voice of Connaissant, or Beaulieu himself:

> Il y avait peut-être un âge qui rendait impossible le geste et la parole. Pour avoir longtemps vécu, on devenait incapable de vivre,.... (123)

The levels of the real (the referential) and of dream, imagination, memory, hallucination and metacommentary are almost indistinguishable. The story unfolds over the space of one day and seemingly ends with the old man's death. (At least, that is what critics have assumed, for the text is not definite.) Milien, le Vieux, lives the last day of his life recalling his farm, his wives, his children, and his animals. The narrative blends and confuses past and present realities, dreams, and memories. Many of the dreams are marked off with parentheses, which help the reader to follow the ramblings of Milien's consciousness; many, however, are not. Some of the offset sequences are action, some are memories, some hallucinations. Milien's world is aimless, inexplicable, and rotting; it is a world which ultimately makes no sense. There is a great deal of pronominal confusion, and deliberately ambiguous references. The time frame of events is imprecise; the structure of flashbacks and fast-forward leaps produces stops and starts and recursiveness, making the narrative spasmodic; the story seems to advance almost at random.

> Quelqu'un parmi les Miliens avait jadis gagné tous les concours de pets de Saint-Jean-de Dieu.... Mais le temps, comme les vestes, finit par suspendre son vol. "On joue-tu ou on joue-tu pas?" demanda l'un des Miliens. La pluie tombait sans doute dehors. (59)

There are very long sentences and no paragraphs, although the edition published in 1979 has divided into chapters those sections originally separated by lines of dots. Sometimes these breaks coincide with the kind of semantic break associated with the end of a chapter, and sometimes not. Predominantly, the narrative appears to be limited to what the old man can see, hear, imagine and hallucinate in his world.

> [Beaulieu] y parvient en réduisant à l'essentiel la description du monde extérieur présent (c'est-à-dire le décor du temps de l'action), alors qu'il peint avec un relief saisissant les souvenirs du vieillard.[10]

However, Milien becomes increasingly incapable of distinguishing between what is really happening in the world around him and what is happening only in his mind. The narrative perspective often shifts to an utterly loose, disoriented stream of consciousness.

> Tant de choses se mouraient dans sa tête depuis qu'il était vieux. Le monde se rapetissait, se rapprochait de lui; dans quelque temps, il serait tout à fait encerclé, il allait être incapable de penser à tout ce qui ne serait pas près de lui; ses mots ne s'allongeraient plus dans le temps, demeureraient emprisonnés dans l'espace de son corps. (48)

Beaulieu thus distances himself (and the reader) from Milien, by indirectly allowing the reader to know more than Milien: "Le Vieux comprit que ce qui avait été à l'intérieur de sa tête s'était déversé sur les choses." (46) At the same time, however, the writer and the reader are often apparently limited to what the old man can perceive, trapped within his failing body. The outer world is greatly reduced in this work, but not (as in Hébert's text) in order that Beaulieu may portray an inner world or psychological reality. Rather, the chaotic, sensorial world of Milien is presented in great detail: sights, smells and sounds are described without any apparent meaning, relevance or interpretation. The depiction of Milien certainly represents the "perception without interiority"[11] of postmodern characterization, but it also serves as a constant reminder that this story is not "true"; it is to be perceived as a writer's attempt at re-creating an old man's reality. Milien is not entirely without emotion or feeling; he is helpless, alienated and terrified when his body and senses fail, and also derives pleasure from the physical world: the warmth of a cat, for example, or sitting by a fire. He does not come to any conclusions or insights, however, nor does he nostalgically long for his land or his farm. His outlook is prosaic and stolid, almost a stereotype of the taciturn, insular habitant.

> Pa me disait: "Quand tu pourras tuer le cochon, le saigner proprement, comme un homme, je me ferai pus soucis pour toi, mon Milien." (37)

> Son père lui avait appris que rien n'était compliqué et que si cela le devenait, il suffisait de cracher deux ou trois fois dans l'herbe pour que tout reprenne la place qui lui était assignée de toute éternité. (43)

Consistent with this characterization, Milien's dreams, memories and visions are related in great sensorial detail; he literally wallows in the sights and smells of his rural past. Blood, urine, manure, and copulation are all remembered, repeatedly, in great physical detail without much affective content. Indeed, the "excremental element" in this book is so pronounced that it must almost be considered a theme. Most of the critics who have discussed this book seem to look beyond these revolting images, and state simply that Milien/Beaulieu is "earthy" or that Beaulieu is purging his writer's inner angst, giving "uninhibited rein to his fantasy and his need for invention, necessary as a form of autoanalysis."[12] Whatever the interpretation, these prurient and lurid passages are a major part of the work. John Moss's review of Jos Connaissant could also be applied to les Grands-pères:

> ...a novel that displays an almost obsessive fascination with death, decomposition, putrescence, and filth... with virtually every bodily orifice and the various textures, discharges, and distensions of the same.... Death, decrepitude, the ubiquitous phallus, these are the measures of Jos's world, of Beaulieu's vision. The writing itself is powerful, but the vision is... oppressive.... a particular philosophical attitude is made graphically manifest, but... [it] is quite an unpleasant novel, and it remains so in the mind long after it has been set aside.[13]

It could perhaps be argued that Beaulieu is drawing upon the Rabelaisian tradition of the grotesque; however, this work also offers "a veritable feast for Freudian critics."[14] The book abounds with Freudian images and motifs: castration, oral and anal fixations, the "ubiquitous phallus," and at one point, in one of the passages that seems to be Beaulieu himself talking, "Et peut-être pourrait-on enfin être incestueux et sadiques et heureux." (101-2) Nevertheless, a Freudian interpretation does not really foster a plausible or reasonable interpretation. As Eva-Marie Kroller notes,

> In his attraction to animals, sexuality and scatology are fused; through a process of mental transfer, this fusion also applies to his attitude to women. It is this element that, for me, spoils a brilliantly conceived novel; Beaulieu´s obsessively anal language becomes unbearable when it is coupled with the notion of woman as cloaca."[15]

Ultimately, the repelling and offensive images serve another, more mundane, purpose. As will be discussed later, Beaulieu achieves his effects, in part, by simultaneously maintaining and destroying the referential illusion. The constant return to the level of graphic detail reasserts and re-establishes the referentiality of the story (as in Hébert´s work), while the excessive language and imagery perverts the narrative logic and undermines the referentiality of the language. The reader is first lulled into accepting the fiction, the words, and then shocked out of it by the bizarre nature of what the language is, in fact, saying.

> Ses deux pieds nus appuyés contre les fesses de l´étalon, Milien fumait; son sexe mou qui ballottait dans les cahots s´était lentement allongé, prenait peu à peu l´espace du pantalon. Cela était bon et s´intégrait à la paisible sensualité du monde. Seule la tentation de mettre son pied dans l´anus du cheval troubla, pendant un moment, la fête. (124)

The reader´s expectations are violated by the narrative, and this may be why Beaulieu creates such ostentatiously revolting images: not for any carnivalesque or Freudian overtones, but quite simply for the shock value. The violence of the repeated images of blood and excrement serve to "play response against meaning,"[16] and although we intellectually recognize the improbabilities, our emotions are caught, and we keep reading. Beaulieu maintains an illusion of narrative logic and progress; it is what the language itself says that denies both.

The narrative moves from a nightmarish, grotesque vision of a dying woman covered in faeces, to a tender and almost lyrical description of a stallion´s penis, to a frame-breaking poetic/philosophical flight in which Milien muses upon those questions that Beaulieu wants to address.

> Mais rien n´avait pu se passer ainsi. Rien ne pouvait être aussi facile. Quand le Vieux avait laissé la Grande Rue, ses amis s´étaient séparés de lui, avaient glissé dans la nuit dont on devinait qu´elle n´allait plus jamais se terminer, qu´elle serait emportée dans son propre mouvement, dans l´anarchie noire. ... Tout devenait risible, vieillir n´avait pas de sens

> puisqu´il fallait sans relâche avoir recours à des descriptions, puisqu´il n´était pas efficace de rester immobile pour penser à quelques idées essentielles. L´imagination était une force mauvaise; elle faisait perdre le temps, elle constituait l´une des formes terribles de l´égarement. Le Vieux ne pouvait pas penser cela, son imagination le lui interdisait, elle le précipitait dans le monde des souvenirs, mais se souvenir n´était peut-être que créer du présent? Rien n´avait eu lieu. Tout arrivait quelque part dans l´absence, entre les murs du futur et du passé. (101-2)

The novel ends with Milien withdrawing into a pre-linguistic reality, a "white, motionless country" that is an apparently primordial, pre-literate, pre-rational mode of being. His grandson can follow him, in narrative, no further. Unlike Big Bear´s withdrawal into the silence of death, however, Milien´s withdrawal is entirely consistent with the rest of the work: the whole text is overtly a novelist´s attempt at projecting and writing possible states of being or reality, and the old man becomes, as essentially he always was, beyond words. The ending reinforces the central premise that the book is not about an old man, but about writing an old man.

> Il était en sueur, sa tête se vidait de toute image; il était plein de trous. Rien ne pouvait plus être retenu, observé, accepté ou refusé. Il n´appartenait désormais qu´à ce qui descendait, s´enfonçait, s´engloutissait, se perdait dans la compagnie des diables aux yeux pervers. Ne restait plus qu´à s´exprimer une dernière pensée qui ne se formulerait pourtant que de l´autre côté du miroir, dans le pays immobile et blanc. (14 novembre 1970/3 février 1971) (157)

Gabrielle Poulin sees the "white, motionless country" in juxtaposition to the "black anarchy" mentioned earlier; thus, she suggests that Beaulieu is making some kind of a relatively optimistic statement:

> Si Milien Bérubé est mort, grand-père, lui, ne peut mourir tout à fait. Au dernier instant, il est rescapé avec toute sa vie telle qu'il l'a recréée en ce dernier jour, par son romancier de petit-fils.[17]

This, however, is interpreting the book at a referential level; Poulin discusses this book in the context of Beaulieu's other works, stating that "[l]a cohérence de l'ensemble compense l'apparente incohérence de certaines parties."[18]

> Pour comprendre l'univers des Grands-pères, ...il faut avoir connu l'espace réel tel que décrit dans Race de monde!: il est le lieu d'origine des autres héros de Victor-Lévy Beaulieu.[19]

Within this context, Poulin sees in les Grands-pères an extension of his other works, a nostalgic search for the past of the people. "Grâce à ce roman, le passé est devenu présent et futur, ...est entré dans un univers cohérent qui peu à peu s'élargit et s'enrichit."[20]

Eva-Marie Kroller notes the many similarities to a roman de la terre, and discusses it as a parodic and self-conscious subversion of that form.

> The presence of a narrator who is himself a novelist indicates that les Grands-pères is the mental reconstruction of a lost time and place; writing is thus not simply recording, but literally creating an old farmer's consciousness and, in doing so, re-defining a literary genre

> much despised by the writers of the Quiet Revolution. Beaulieu's les Grands-pères joins the many other literary works in contemporary Québec whose form is a result of ironizing, destroying, and re-assembling traditional genres that no longer suit the reality they purport to enclose.[21]

The incoherent, morbid and sordid world of the novel would seem to preclude all attempts at realistic interpretations; it is interesting to note that critics seem to focus on the limited referential aspect, even though they must step outside the text to do this and include his other works in order to find for this work some kind of truth-telling, referential function. The critics, while acknowledging the postmodern form of the work, treat it in a most traditional manner! Most agree, however, that the predominating theme of Beaulieu's work is the constructing, the telling of the story rather than the story itself. "The mythopoeic process [is] the subject that most concerns Beaulieu, for all exterior realities are inevitably subsumed into raw materials for creativity."[22]

In Beaulieu's work, the incoherent discourse generated by Milien's consciousness deconstructs the realism of the novel and its language from within, but in addition, it is explicity made clear that the old man's existence only becomes narrative through the consciousness of his novelist grandson (and, of course, Beaulieu). The story comes to us through Milien, but he does not tell it; that is, the words are not his, but a "separate domain, the narrative world of existential reality."[23] Milien's existence is contained within the story, brought into being by his grandson's awareness. Thus, there are two distinct versions of reality presented: the reality of the old man which comes into being, into narrative, because of his grandson's attempt at imagining and writing him, and also the reality of the writing which self-consciously gives Milien an existence. These two modes are implicit throughout the text; held simultaneously present are the author's imaginative reality and the grandfather's linear, existential reality.

The novel subsumes both into a single version and the conceptualization and expression of these different realities (or more precisely, states of being) is the implicit subject of the narrative. These states are created with narrative, and, as already noted, are continually being disrupted; the reader's expectations are aroused and then frustrated. It is therefore essential that the narrative illusion be always, but only temporarily, maintained. The discourse generated within the novel deconstructs the realism of the novel both by foregrounding its own creation and by what it says: simultaneously maintaining and destroying the narrative credibility. The collage form in which the old man's life is presented is ideal for this purpose; it is representational while breaking with realism through its fragmentation and discontinuity.

Using Lauzen's chart, this book, can be classified as overtly self-conscious. The narrating of the story is a major part of the subject matter and is explicitly referred to within the story: "(Désormais, pourrait-on s'écrire.)" (61) There are passages where the narrator questions and casts doubt on the narration, using words like "probably," and "perhaps," which serve to focus the reader's attention on the reliability of the narrator and the illusion created by his words - that which is usually unquestioningly accepted. In spite of the fact that much of the story is told in the third person, the author is present; there are some passages which can only be the author's voice, but there are no passages with an overt, authorial "I" in the first person. This work, in postmodern terms, "does not accept person."[24]

LGP could perhaps be considered as tending towards a metafictional absence of plot. There are a number of incidents related in the course of the story, but the reader has great difficulty in making connections between them, finding some overall unity. Some of Milien's dreams and the events related are so grotesque, so blatantly impossible and inconsistent that interpretation is not possible. The result is a postmodern version of irrealism: some small events seem very important, other large, apocalyptic events turn out to be imaginary.

The characters may not be self-conscious - Milien is hardly conscious of the world around him - but they certainly represent, as already noted, the postmodern absence of characterization, the "empty Self." There is almost no physical description of some (the three Miliens, his friends) and an almost microscopic description of others (the Milliennes, Chien Chien Pichlotte and their diseases). The characters are grotesque, which covertly mocks the humanity of realistic characters. As already mentioned, the setting is limited to what the old man notices, and only sporadically described.

The theme of this work is truly self-reflexive: its theme is itself. Those critics that find meaning for it in the larger context of the rest of his work are stepping outside of the text to do so. Thus, LGP meets another postmodern criterion: the text does not contain any literary "key" to itself that would unite its various fragments. If we consider this work in the larger context of his other work, there is an obvious, intertextual element; LGP seems to be partial and incomplete because it is a smaller part of a larger literary universe. The structure of the work, with the inextricably entangled levels of dreams and realities, could be classified as either a metafictional overabundance or absence of structure. There are also elements which seem to parody a roman de la terre; thus, it can perhaps be seen as a metafictional subversion of a traditional genre; there is certainly a metafictional disturbing of the "uni-level surface expected in conventional realism."[25]

The language is exaggerated and vivid, which serves to focus the reader more on the surface of the work - the words themselves - than on any message it purportedly contains. The process of communication is disrupted, and therefore, emphasized. The chaotic, run-on, monologue approaches unintelligibility and there are sections of the book where the language reaches "extreme opacity," destroying its referentiality.

> Et finir dans le rire bruyant qui abrille le ciel et recouvrir les fesses de Milienne de beaucoup de sang. (121)

In LGP, the reader finds wisps of meaning from which significance must be derived. The sentences are long and run-on, but the grammar is surprisingly correct. The dislocation of the language depends upon, in the first place, the creation of a relatively coherent context; the conventions must be put in place in order to be removed. The medium, the physical presentation of the text, is a departure from the norm: no paragraphs and no chapters (at least in the first edition); sections are divided by lines of dots.

Critics have found a variety of meanings in this work. Poulin finds it significant within the context of the larger universe of Beaulieu´s other works, all relating to Québec coming to terms with itself and its past. Others see it as a modern day roman de la terre, making an ironic comment on a previous well-known literary form. Still others find it to be a psychological image or metaphor for Québec´s past, finding it to be, in Freudian terms, anal-infantileperverted.[26] The text itself does not offer any kind of explicit comment, or key to an interpretation of itself; any message, beyond the overt preoccupation with the act of writing, is simply not there.

LGP is both self-conscious and postmodern. One must ask, however, whether Beaulieu is being given credit for his created, multi-textual universe (based upon traditional, realistic standards and ontologically anchored), or credit for his postmodern innovations which constitute the dislocations and incoherence apparent in this text. LGP should perhaps be considered as postmodern in the performative mode, rather than the self-reflexive; Beaulieu's postmodernism is manifested mainly through an absence of any ontological anchoring and a lack of any coherent, unifying thread which ties the book together; there is a "deliberate sabotage of any possible reconstruction of the 'reality' of situations."[27] Certain passages have meaning, but overall, the text does not.

Formally, LGP can be defined as postmodern: it subverts and frustrates the reader's expectations, offering no metanarratives or totalizing visions of the world which would provide some order and reason. It proceeds from the framework of radical indeterminacy that is held to be postmodern; the fictional world of LGP is random, disintegrating and apparently meaningless. This is not necessarily the same, however, as the presentation or textual awareness of "the unpresentable" that Lyotard, among others, insisted upon. Beaulieu is not asserting any universal or eternal truths, and he certainly manifests the postmodern "absence of a centre" in his text; what, then, is he offering?

Random and obscure writing has been justified on the grounds that it represents "meaninglessness," but even a work which has the theme of meaninglessness must be coherent and unified enough on some level to make its statement. Creating a technically sophisticated surface, as Beaulieu does, does not create significance or meaning. (And this is also why Beaulieu can be accused of being sensationalistic: if he wants to disrupt the referentiality of language, to decontextualize the meaning of narrative, why must he borrow power from pointedly Freudian and excessively foul images?) The truth that Beaulieu offers is precisely the absence beneath the surface; he is attempting to show effects without cause, history without meaning, a life without interpretation. LGP must therefore be considered an example of negative art, and Beaulieu's technique, an end in itself. Thus, although this text can be judged as postmodern on the basis of form, some critics (such as Palmer, Lyotard and Spanos) would exclude this text from the postmodern canon because it is a "formalistic and aestheticizing evasion of the historical world."[28]

## A Short Sad Book

George Bowering is the most overtly metafictional and postmodern of the writers discussed in this thesis. Although Wiebe and Hébert use innovative and self-reflexive techniques, their works can be seen as operating within the conventions of modernist realism with the accompanying contradictions: both the writer and the reader must be invisible in order to maintain the illusion of reality. Beaulieu's work is self-reflexive in that it is apparently centered on the process of its own creation, but this is acheived, more or less, by constructing and then deconstructing some of the standard props of realism. In A Short Sad Book, Bowering overtly and explicitly discusses the act of writing the book the reader is reading; his text is both metafictional and postmodern because it examines the issue of postmodernism and is, at the same time, self-consciously postmodern. Bowering does this directly, not, as Beaulieu does, by what is left out, but by what is clearly and relatively coherently left in. Bowering sets up an antagonism between his own work and the literary conventions of modernism in order to show that "the represented reality in the modern novel is not substantial but formal."[29] Realism, he states, "is no more like the real than any previous method of making fiction."[30]

Most of Bowering's work, both critical and fictive, is devoted to exploring the themes of art, language, identity (often Canadian culture and society) and repeatedly, the conflict between art and reality: "the relations between subject and author, or art and life...or at least life and literature."[31] A great deal of his writing is self-reflexive in the strictest sense of the word, "a mode through which the poet's thoughts and the act of creation itself are reflected in the form and content of the composition."[32]

In a A Short Sad Book Bowering explores the creative process in "a self-reflexive narrative that directly involves the reader."[33] To analyse ASSB - what it is, and what it contains - would be to list the principles of metafiction and postmodernism already discussed: Bowering systematically manipulates the formal elements of fiction in order to address the problematic ontology of the relationship between language and reality. A Short Sad Book is, and is about, metafiction; Bowering discusses postmodernism, and creates a postmodernist novel. There is more to it, of course, but the predominant theme of this book, as in most of his other works, is the act and process of creation; ASSB is a vehicle for putting Bowering's theories into practice. Bowering himself has said:

> In [ASSB], I was trying to clear the boards and make clear a lot of my opinions that had been working up over the years on various things and say them out.... I was trying to get the sense of spreading the whole thing out on one big flat surface.... The book just ends because one ran out of space or ran out of pages to do or what ever.[34]

There is a kind of core story which Bowering departs from and returns to, but it defies any attempt at plot summary or analysis; rather, it is a kind of literary Trivial Pursuit. Early in the novel, he writes "what do you mean, this is no novel" (26), and "Do you know I am keeping secrets from you & I want you to discover them. & I will be disappointed with myself if you do" (16). Bowering's brand of postmodernism is a playful "non-art" that resists interpretation; the author is emphasizing and changing the rules of communication, and the reader must attempt to decipher the text.

> Bowering writes of writing, of himself writing, of his novel being written, of his novel writing. The novel writes, and Bowering keeps up with it, writing. The novel is not about writing; it is writing. What it is about is staking peonies, the Black Mountain influence, Canadian history and Canadian literature, smoking cigars, Evangeline and Sir John A. Macdonald, postmodernism, British Columbia, the West Coast experience, alienation, the Bowering experience, pursuit of the Pretty Good Canadian novel, the Tercentenary History of Canada, Volume III, from Laurier to King, MCMVIV-MCMXLV, rootless cosmopolites, feckless nationalists, baseball, Americans, underwater discoveries, Tom Thom(p)son's body, other things, motifs, word-combinations, images, and a plethora of allusions. A Short Sad Book does not make allusions; it consumes them. It is a novel filled with its own sense of being a novel.[35]

ASSB is part fiction, part criticism, part essay, part autobiography, and part poem. There is even an index; the text explicitly mocks and parodies various forms of the traditional novel, Canadian literature and literary convention. The self-consciousness of the narrator-author is the most prominent feature of this work and the overriding metafictional element. The conventions of realism demand that the author be invisible, producing a representation of reality while disguising the reality of the act of writing; in ASSB, the author is always intrusively visible, presenting the writing of the text, and involving the reader in the process of writing. Bowering does not "play hide-and-seek with his readers" but "comes to the fore both in his fiction and in his criticism."[36] He is attempting, first and foremost, to cancel the illusion that fiction is representational; he is self-consciously creating an artefact. In "The Painted Window: Notes on Post Realist Fiction," Bowering states that

> The reader's first experience of any story is an experience of form. He opens the book, sees black marks, & away he goes. Formally, in that situation, there is no criterion that will distinguish fiction from 'non-fiction.' It is all fiction - the reality here is the book. Fictilis: (capable of being) fashioned. Hence the only way a story can be told is fictively. To put it more boldly: life is revealed as a fiction.[37]

Bowering is drawing attention to the fact that in self-conscious postmodernist fiction the writing of the text is often present; the self-reflexive structures reveal the creating of the text, emphasizing and making visible the surface of the text, which therefore constitutes its meaning and significance.

> My favorite place in Alberta (oh this new pen is getting broken in nicely) is Drumheller (my wife will hate that one because she hates this novel she says I'm getting far too removed from my readers with all this obscure self-absorption.

> What do you think dear friend) although I have been there only once.
>
> (I mean I said it was a novel but did it say it was a novel.&if it didnt say so it can hardly be a novel because then it would have been something else calling itself a novel & I would have disagreed.)
>
> It may get to be a short sad book. (58)

The metacommentary on the construction of the novel confuses the ontological levels of the text; the novel itself becomes a character in the story. This text is a satire of a novel on one level, but also a novel that insists on its own reality.

> All this dialogue was too much for the novel. I noticed it was beginning to speak in short sentences with periods. Literature fell from the skies. The novel withdrew itself painfully from its skin & assumed position five. The skies opened. (72)

Bowering ends his first section by remarking that "I felt as if the background of the novel was beginning to take shape" (37).

> Well I said it is a novel&so I will at last give you some scenery & dialogue. (38)
>
> Confuse setting&person confuse landscape&characters you wind up with thematic criticism not a novel. (53)

The narrative does not alternate between realities. There is only one - the reality of the narrative - and the intruding author-narrator foregrounds and explores, with the reader, the writing of the book, the act of creation.

Bowering is concerned with the narrative voice; he describes it as the "I, someone, that voice speaking to you at last, the intrusion you will probably call it, though I have been here all along, of the first person."[38] ASSB explores the limits of narrative: "how much recursion and interruption does it take until no narrative remains?"[39] There are narrators parodying narrators, arguing with "the" narrator, interrupting and proving a point, all of which has the effect of destroying the illusion of narrative voice, or rather, the logic of narrative discourse.

> Your father told you about things you had never seen because he was an adult. & the same with Canada. It told you to sing about things you had never seen. What did a maple leaf look like.
>
> You learned to draw one, what is this second person doing here, oh, I see now, just as you learned to draw Australia. (p.60)

The book is also full of often obscure Canadian references and there are a number of "Can-Lit" nicknames: Al (Purdy), Frank (Davey), Peggy (Atwood) and so on. The constant intertextual and linguistic play is the element by which the various sections and surfaces of the work are related and loosely connected; the seemingly unrelated fragments are integrated at a ludic level, which "renders the jarring elements of his discursive narrative as comic and parodic."[40]

> ...[in] the open play of signification... without regard for an original or ultimate meaning,... ludism signifies textual play; the text is viewed as a game affording both author and reader the

possibility of producing endless meanings and relationships.[41]

Bowering's textual play incorporates the reader, the characters and Bowering himself. The writer's consciousness plays with the narrative; the jokes, syllogisms, melodrama and puns cohere and define the text on one level, but they offer no apparent meaning, no ontological anchors. The clarity and meaning of particular narrative moments is constantly undercut by the contradictory logic of other moments, and the textual play, present throughout the work, illustrates Bowering's self-reflexive awareness.[42] ASSB has an obvious theatricality that is used to foreground the phenomenal reality of the text - the process of both writing and reading the text - even while the characters, jokes and puns portray the aesthetics and ideology of postmodernism.

> If I want this to be a postmodern novel I'd better forget about history. You'll forget about history if you just quit writing it for reasons outlined above & by & by history will forget about you. You can take my word for it. (107)
>
> Wow, is this ever a postmodern novel. Frank, is this a postmodern novel. I'm sorry if you werent expecting a postmodern novel. I wasnt expecting any of it. That's what I mean. (108)

Although the tone of the work is playful and there are a number of word games involved, AASB is also an exploration of language and literary form. "As with all really good games, immensely serious things are going on, sometimes on the surface and sometimes deep beneath the surface."[43] The premise that "art is play" is a common theme of both metafictional and postmodern texts. Self-conscious fiction uses "meta" levels of discourse to play with the narrative, to shift the signification of fictional rules and contexts, and to allow release from established patterns of communication.[44]

The writing of both history and fiction is a recurring theme in ASSB: "In Canada the only history is writing history" (76). Bowering is making essentially the same point that both Wiebe and Hébert had to make about history, but he is more succinct: "Incidents are not history. Writing history is history" (94). Bowering explores "the grammar of Canadian history and literary tradition" but the logic of the dialogue "exceeds that of history and of straight fiction."[45] In ASSB, Bowering is examining and playing with opposing and contradictory cultural, semantic and ideological systems, and he self-consciously presents his work in a fragmented form; ASSB "works against the principle of a unified structure that solidifies the form of the modernist novel."[46]

The style of the text is free-flowing and intuitive; the form is fragmented: sixty-one short chapters in six sections, numbered with large Roman numerals. Nearly every sentence begins a new paragraph, and in spelling and punctuation Bowering creates a personal language using particular patterns of language and idiom, signs instead of words ("&"), phonetic spelling ("pumpt"), run-on sentences, and small case letters. These devices reinforce the colloquial quality of his work; Bowering seeks "to elucidate the relationship between language and response,"[47] and again, many of these devices are explicitly discussed: "& people say why are you doing archaic avant-garde writing. This is warmed over Gertrude Stein there I said her name why are you doing it" (154).

Bowering consistently and explicitly includes the reader and the reader's expectations in the narrative; "the reader is not left on the margin to observe the author at play, as in most postmodern writing."[48]

> Shove over, I want to talk to the reader. I want to say something to the reader reading. Reader reading, dont imagine any more that you can put on your invisibility suit & watch what they are doing, what Jane & Rochester are doing, what they are saying to each other... (174)

The reader is involved at a textual, immediate level, becoming a character, a necessary partner/player who contributes to the realization of the writing act. To an extent, the reader is required to participate in the text as a co-creator of the text, and this can be very frustrating. In ASSB, the reader is given the role of a detective who must try to solve certain puzzles, but who is also always at the mercy of the writer, "always a few steps behind the writer who detects his impulse to pin him down."[49] At the same time, of course, the reader is made aware that there is no "correct" or final solution; an overall or thematic interpretation is impossible. "Bowering does in fiction what is traditionally done to fiction."[50]

> I might be hiding things from you but I am hiding them in this book. At least you know where to look. I wish you luck. (43)

As will be discussed later, this illustrates the fundamental difference between Beaulieu and Bowering. Beaulieu creates a postmodern, fictional world with gaps (Leerstellen) in it, thus drawing the reader's attention to the artifice involved, but which also, in order to work, must draw the reader into the text, into the fictional world. In LGP, the author is a self-conscious presence but the reader is required, or present, only through implication, and is unacknowledged. In Bowering's work, the reader is directly addressed and discussed, continually being reminded that "this is not reality" by the author's overt interruptions. The reader is made aware that he is holding a book and reading it; thus, the referential and fictional illusion is destroyed, and the fictional world becomes a text. Bowering uses metafictional techniques to continually deconstruct the book before the reader's very eyes, even though the reader is challenged to discover a context for the work within the structure of the book.

The self-consciousness of the work is also the point of the work; by destroying the referential illusion, it asserts its own reality. Bowering is not attempting a realistic rendering of experience or memory, but instead, the fictive act.

> His fiction is not to be measured through the norms of external reality.... not to be interpreted in the same way critics interpret mimetic fiction. His fiction is not realistic because it is mimetic; it is real in the sense of knowing that it is being written.[51]

Bowering's work is overtly concerned with the realities which the realists, and, to an extent, the modernists, ignore. His work self-consciously and self-reflexively presents itself as artefact. His fiction "posits itself as being more real than modernist realism exactly because it is an act of consciousness, an art of surfaces."[52] He has stated that "if the writer...becomes attentive to the surface upon which he must work... the literal prose will become more interesting & the reader will be called upon to actualize the work."[53]

> But history is an idea of linear time, she said.... What else is there, not counting eternity because here you are said someone else. You might as well know it, it was myself.
>
> Turning to me she said you know because you are mouthing it, there is mythical time. These three easterners are from a text book, they are admythical in short. Myth is a truth of repetitive time. It is a blot that bleeds thru all time.
>
> I bowed my head beneath her point. You are right, I said. This has all been a waste of time. (p.184)

Bowering's work reflects a postmodern world view as Fokkema defined it: an anti-realistic mode based on a polemics opposed to the modernist belief in art as a means of establishing and representing value or coherence. Bowering seeks to cancel the illusion that literature is representational; for Bowering, "art is simply another subjective creation of the human mind that cannot pretend to reveal truth and meaning in a world whose values are constantly refurnished."[54] One must ask, however, if Bowering has entirely moved beyond modernism. He details its failures and objects to any pretense of objectivity, but he is only referring to those modernists who saw art as a refuge for truth and meaning. As discussed in the second chapter of this thesis, postmodernism can be seen as a logical continuation of certain practices which began with the modernists. Smaro Kamboureli believes that Bowering does not manage to divorce himself from modernism, but hovers between modernism and postmodernism; thus, she calls his work a "fiction of unrest."[55] Bowering himself has said

> The compulsive commentator does not proclaim that any writing described as post-modern is free of the taint of modernism, nor _vice-versa_. For one thing, post-modernism grew out of the fiction caused by the modernists in their carving of patterns in the wood sawn for them by the Romantics & realists.[56]

As with parody, Bowering seems to require the very system - or at least, the reader's knowledge of it - that he is seeking to subvert. He redeploys the devices of modernism and parodies its claims, yet "he can go beyond the mimesis of modernism only by exorcising its tropes through his own use of them."[57]

Nevertheless, to a greater degree than the other writers discussed in this thesis, ASSB manifests the principles of postmodernist fiction, attempting "to re-establish the relation of language to reality.... [by] the deconstruction of the innocence of realism."[58] ASSB is metafictional in form and content (both self-reflexive and self-conscious) and postmodern in orientation.

With reference to Lauzen's chart, ASSB is most certainly an example of overt metafiction: Bowering has explicitly foregrounded, discussed and disrupted nearly every aspect of the traditional, realist story. The telling of the story, the narrating, is a major part of the work, and the narrator is visibly engaged in the act of composition. The reader is also dramatized, thematized and often directly addressed.

The plot, while relatively absent, is also thematized; the author-narrator and the characters search for The Pretty Good Canadian Novel, for what it means to be Canadian, for a connecting principle within the text, and so on. The plot, however, is subordinate to the external organizing principle of the entire text, which is the playful presentation of literary conventions and theory.

The characters are aware of their fictional status, they appear and reappear, address the author, complain and advise about the work in progress; there is even a talking beaver.

> She lookt around for help. Nobody would help her. The novel is writing it, I said, trying to help... But I thought the novel was a character

> in the story she said. At least once in a while. Yes, I suppose so, it is at heart an autobiographical novel, I said. (84)

The setting is self-consciously played with: presented, described, even discussed, and then undercut.

> Scenery has no beginning & no end. It has no ending. It is there everywhere whether you are there moving or not, sorry David Hume.... For our purposes scenery begins from what you can see standing on the beach at Sooke Inlet looking west but it doesnt. (25) As sunlight to the east glinted on the canal & toucht church spires & towers, the city began to stir with a faint low hum. Hmmmmmmmm. Hrrrrrrrr. (161)

As already mentioned, the major theme of the work is the work itself; it is explicitly self-aware. There is also the metafictional and postmodern theme of "fiction as a game," and Bowering pointedly disavows any symbolism or real world applications.

Structure, by its very nature, is very difficult to make self-conscious: it is a principle of organization that is internal and inherent. Bowering comes close to a self-conscious structure, however, by organizing the text with the external and artificial principle of literature as a set of rules and contexts to be examined and illustrated, and by playing with frames and levels that become mixed and inconsistent. There are short, disconnected chapters, an index, parodies of book reviews, historical dramas and other aspects of traditional realism. However, these elements are apparently unconnected; there is no final pattern or code offered to solve the puzzles that the text offers.

Bowering´s approach to language is also postmodern; again and again, throughout the work, he reminds the reader that language is anything but a transparent, neutral conduit, but he does not make this point, as Beaulieu does, by making his language opaque and by continually sending the reader down a linguistic dead-end. Bowering´s prose is playful, and he draws the reader´s attention to the words themselves by punning, by exaggerating the figurative language or literalizing it. The surface of the prose is indeed made interesting, but Bowering also manages to communicate his ideas about language and literature through relatively coherent language. He disrupts both syntax and discourse structure; his odd spellings, (´wisht´) also draw attention to the way we speak. Throughout the text, the primacy or sovereignty of meaning is constantly displaced by accidents of form in language: puns, rhymes, word-play, distorted words, etc.

The medium, the printing and pagination, is relatively standard, but Bowering often self-consciously refers to the chapter number he is on and discusses the typesetting of the text.

Although Bowering states in ASSB that "Victor-Lévy Beaulieu is my brother," (160) these two writers make an interesting comparison because they reflect two very different approaches to constructing a postmodern narrative. Bowering and Beaulieu, in quite different ways, make the reader engage the text in order to create meaning. Beaulieu builds, or reconstructs, a fragmented, deconstructed world with the reader inside. Bowering, in contrast, continually breaks the illusion of reality within the created world, and the reader is thrown out of the text, back to reality, back to himself, reading. Beaulieu only implies that there is a reality beyond the text; except for the "white, motionless country" that is beyond words, the narrative is focused almost exclusively upon itself. Bowering repeatedly asserts the world, intruding upon the reader so that the reader is aware of the activity of reading he is engaged in. John Moss calls this the difference between "the closed world, re-conceived, and the defiantly open."[59]

Both use language "to expose the arbitrary and limiting nature of conventional narrative,"[60] but the difference between their approaches is evident in the way each uses language. Bowering uses relatively correct syntax to communicate nonsense: the novel making love to Evangeline. However, when he disrupts the normal sentence structure, it is to expose or deflate the rules we unconsciously exercise in order to make us aware of our expectations. Bowering uses the realist mode to highlight its fallacies; "he insists there is a world beyond the text at every turn."[61]

For Beaulieu's purposes, however, it is essential that the narrative illusion, or at least elements of it, remain temporarily intact. The reader's attention is drawn to elements within the narrative, reinforcing narrative closure instead of violating it, as Bowering does, by reaching beyond the text. Put another way, in ASSB, the reader is jarred out of the text; in LGP, the reader is constantly jarred within the text by the confusing and often repelling images. Thus, it is necessary to sustain the narrative in order to violate it; conventions must be present in order to be disrupted. In LGP, "the misdirections and excesses of language lead not away from the fiction but deeper into it."[62]

Bowering exposes the illusion of narrative reality and makes this process part of the fiction; Beaulieu maintains the illusion of narrative reality; it is the language itself, what it says, that declares itself absurd.[63] Yet both Bowering and Beauliu achieve the same effect, for both are attempting

> to break down the artificial and arbitrary barriers between life and the printed word, to break through the walls of the labyrinth which language has built around us, and in which we too readily find ourselves lost.[64]

Both attempt to move the reader, ultimately, beyond the narrative reality; both "use language and the narrative text...to effect a change between consciousness and the nature of reality."[65]

Bowering "reduces the word-worlds to words, and restores to the reader a sense of the real beyond text, of reality as a context in which...even books may be real."[66] In Beaulieu, the concept of different realities is the implicit object of the discourse; the story comes to us through Milien, but the words are not his - the discourse of the novel deconstructs the realism of the novel by foregrounding its own creation.

The Temptations of Big Bear and les Fous de Bassan were found to be dealing essentially with epistemological (and therefore, modernist) themes and issues: the ways of knowing, and the limits of knowledge. In contrast, the focus in les Grands-pères and A Short Sad Book is ontological; both Bowering and Beaulieu attempt to illustrate modes of being, states of realities, rather than problems of knowing. The emphasis is on the constructing, the fictionalizing, of possible worlds, and the limits and modes of existence of such fictional worlds. It could be argued that both Bowering's and Beaulieu's works are patterned and unified by their preoccupation with the act, process, and results of literary creation, which is, after all, a recurring theme in both works. Both of these texts are self-conscious, but they also proceed from and establish the radical indeterminacy and ontological uncertainty that is held to be postmodern. The unifying thread, in this instance, is paradoxically postmodern: the realignment of reading, being, and the text.

## V: Conclusion

This thesis began by proposing a definition of metafiction as an anti-mimetic mode of writing, and then examined metafiction in the broader context of postmodernist fiction. The complicated and contradictory theoretical bias of the postmodern movement makes it difficult to summarize the main features of postmodernist fiction; critical evaluations and judgements on an ongoing process must, of course, be provisional. Very generally, there seem to be two modes distinguishable in postmodernist writing: one which seeks to expose the illusion of referentiality in language, which refuses to locate meaning or "truth" in language, and one that still seeks to be referential, that sees language as a cognitive tool with which to establish temporary, provisional truths within a framework of ontological uncertainty.[1] In the nonreferential mode, texts are seen as withdrawing from the world, focusing only upon their own structures, and thus, turning the medium into the artefact - the end, rather than the means. In the referential mode, broadly associated with a phenomenological approach, texts still engage the world; the medium is seen as a means of communication; in this mode, an unstable, contingent subject approaches an unstable, contingent reality, without necessarily establishing and imposing meaning.[2]

In practice, metafiction can belong to either mode of postmodernism; it can be referential or nonreferential, but it is often defined and categorized as the literary expression of the postmodern, nonreferential mode, that is, writing that does not aim for referentiality. Obviously, however, such writing is not necessarily nonreferential. It may be focused, as is Bowering's, upon the writer involved in his environment, which is why such critics as Christopher Butler do not accept the critical designation of metafiction as a "nonreferential" mode. Even though the subject apparently only engages itself, such writing can be perceived as the artist phenomenologically observing and reporting on the creative process.[3] Strictly speaking, simply reflecting some aspect of an autonomous literary structure undermines the referential illusion of a text, but this does not make the text nonreferential or even self-referential. The critical distinction between a referential and a nonreferential mode in postmodernism may ultimately prove to be useless, at least for literary art. As Dillard notes, "since words necessarily refer to the world, as paint does not, literary contexts must be more responsible to the actual world than painting contexts must be."[4] The critical distinction between texts that engage or withdraw from the world expresses the self-destructive paradox at the heart of postmodernist fiction: what conventions can we use to illustrate the insubstantiality of conventions? The two modes perhaps merely represent two different approaches -

intuitive versus intellectual - to the same end: both are attempting to dislocate and defamiliarize the arbitrary structures - themselves included - that determine and create significance and meaning.[5]

Although "metafictional" and "postmodern" are often used synonymously, the two terms do not mean the same thing. Much of this confusion has occurred because metafiction is a mode of writing which operates in opposition to the realist code, and postmodernism is, above all else, "an illusion-breaking art."[6] A great many texts deliberately expose their own artificiality, however, without being at all postmodern in orientation. "Frame-breaking" can create strange effects or even reinforce the realistic, referential level of a novel, but it does not in itself make a novel either metafictional or postmodern. Metafiction becomes postmodern when a work that focuses upon the creative processing of itself also subverts and undermines the referentiality of the text or its language, thus emphasizing and calling into question any ordering or artificial construction of significance. When a work foregrounds its own ontological structure and status by deconstructing reified notions of time, space, character, plot, and narrative technique, the subversion or frame-breaking is seen as an expression of the radical indeterminacy that characterizes the postmodern world view. In order for a text to be considered postmodern, it must subvert not only the literary conventions of language or narrative, but the metanarratives, the conventions of thought which determine and define all realities (which is why postmodernism is sometimes defined as defining itself right out of existence). Postmodern fiction must move beyond the disconnections and disjunctions of modernism, and must illustrate a random world of multiplicity and contingency without ontological anchoring at any level of literary "reality." Postmodernist writers, in the extreme, must be both anti-realistic and anti-modernist.

Metafictional writing addresses and embodies the tension between literature and the world, thus, between language and the world, as well as between any perceiver and any object. Postmodern writing does not concentrate so much upon debunking or exalting this relationship, as upon questioning the nature and validity of the human process of writing, how we *make sense* of the world, and this is why the self-consciousness of metafiction is often held to be postmodern.

> In the event that myth, archetype, and language are subverted - as they have been by sophisticated modernists - the novelist may then turn for subject and authority or validation to the act of writing itself.[7]

In focusing upon the constructedness of meaning, many postmodern texts refuse to offer a context; the reader is required to construct his own means of interpreting the text. The reader is not allowed to be a passive consumer of the author-created fictional world, for the text does not offer any means of arriving at a total understanding or interpretation of the text. The reader must become actively engaged in, and is thus made aware of, the process of reconstructing the rules governing the perception and definition of literary reality. Our inability to resolve many postmodernist texts illustrates "how we, as writers and readers, desire and make closure," and this has profound implications for the critical study of literature.[8]

Postmodern novels are disintegrated and disconnected, ultimately and unresolvably ambivalent. They attempt to foreground and deconstruct the familiar ways of thinking about fiction and the world. Current criticism, particularly as it deals with postmodern fiction, exhibits the same self-conscious ambivalence. For both readers and critics, it is no longer possible to be an objective observer, an epistemologically innocent bystander.[9] The recognition that all writing carries an underlying ideology, all vision is mediated, forces critics to deconstruct their own views. The difficulties and complications increase when one sets out to examine texts that are held to be postmodern with reference to a set of critical and theoretical rules. By its very nature, postmodernism deconstructs and denies such rules, even while being entirely concerned with, and proceeding from, such a theoretical context. Criticism both embodies and exposes the paradox of postmodernism.

As noted, a work can be self-referential (metafictional) without being postmodern, that is, without disrupting its own diegetic or linguistic processes. Thus, it is necessary to look not only at the metafictional devices which are present in a given text, but to look at the purpose such devices serve in the context in which they occur. All of the novels discussed in this thesis contain metafictional elements, and the writers use different discursive stategies which all, in their own ways, reject descriptive or mimetic realism; however, they cannot all be considered postmodern.

Wiebe is metafictional in his foregrounding of the writing and interpreting of history and fiction, showing that both are human constructs, made continuous and coherent only by their writers and readers. He also attempts to juxtapose two conflicting ways of knowing or structuring the world: the Indian, oral reality is contrasted with the white, documentary reality. Wiebe emphasizes the constructedness of meaning and shows the bias and limiting nature of historical documents, but he does not attempt to deconstruct or move beyond the bias of his own document. His intent is didactic; Wiebe treats language as a referential means of establishing and communicating a personal truth. The fragmented narrative and bits of history in The Temptations of Big Bear are unified by Wiebe's artistic vision, made coherent and interpretable; Wiebe creates a Christian myth with Big Bear as a hero, the suffering prophet. Wiebe unironically reflects a universal myth; in spite of his innovations, Wiebe's text is grounded in nineteenth-century traditions of realism which perceive literature as offering a special kind of knowledge. He attempts to create a transcending vision, beyond time, place and race, of a universal human truth.

Like Wiebe, Hébert multiplies and juxtaposes narrators and narrative levels. In les Fous de Bassan, Hébert's "discourse of the unreal" constantly foregrounds and undermines the discourse of the real, apparently subverting the image of a rational, coherent world, but again, the fragmentations and disruptions are finally resolved. Hébert balances both referentiality and dislocation, first subverting the referential illusion and then rebuilding it; structurally, Hébert creates a fictional world where opposing principles can coexist. However, the interplay of contradictory discourses (realistic and fantastic) serves to enhance the depiction of a psychological reality, a subconscious, irrational dimension. There is a constant slippage between the real and the unreal, but the text is organized and coheres through the dominating and repeated images of repression, desire, and violence. There are numerous self-reflexive structures in her work which depict an atemporal, purely fictive dimension and serve as frame-breaks, but which, in the context of the rest of the novel, do not represent the radical indeterminacy of postmodernism.

In both Wiebe and Hébert, the narration proceeds through multiplying perpectives, "aggravating the fragmentation of the text,"[10] although, as noted, the fragmentation is finally integrated and recuperated. The elaborate narrative artifice in these works operates, in the final analysis, to lend verisimilitude to a fragmented version of a modern moral and social realism. Although both writers appear to approach ontological issues, comparing ways of perceiving and being in the world, the dominant theme of their work is not the metafictional/postmodern "art is artifice." Wiebe and Hébert are both self-reflexive and metafictional, but in the overall effects that they produce, they do not reflect the principles of literary postmodernism.

Bowering and Beaulieu both emphasize the fiction-making process itself, the mechanics of creativity, rather than the results of the writing. Their texts self-consciously focus almost exclusively on the private, fictional world of their own structure and narrative. In Bowering and Beaulieu, the narration is delegated to narrators "whose discourse becomes increasingly self-referential."[11] Bowering and Beaulieu are attempting to incorporate two modes: a questionable narrator generates one level of discourse while the fragmentations and interruptions, overtly the author's "voice," dislocates and subverts the logic and meaning of the narrative. In les Grands-pères, the incoherent discourse and lurid, morbid language deconstruct the realism of the novel from within; in addition, it is overtly a story told, an author's attempt at imagining and articulating a certain fictional reality. In form, Beaulieu is postmodern, but the effects he achieves are through absence: an absence of coherence, unity, and any means of establishing the reality of much of his narrative. This is not really the

---

same as the textual awareness of "the unpresentable," the "absence of a centre," as Lyotard puts it, that defines postmodernist writing. After reading this work, one is reminded of the question: "when is a work about meaninglessness and when is it simply meaningless?"[12]

Beaulieu and Bowering are similiar in that both their texts contain a combination of structural narrative and unstructured fabulation. Where Beaulieu is absent, however, Bowering is explicitly and intrusively present. In A Short Sad Book, Bowering is most certainly attacking and subverting the documentary and didactic function of literature; paradoxically, he is also attempting to illustrate and explain the principles of postmodern fiction. The subject of his novel is the "alliance of writer, character, plot and reader"[13] that essentially creates the novel; his novel both reflects and discusses postmodern theory. Bowering is overtly both anti-realistic and anti-modern, (although whether he actually breaks entirely away from modernism is another question) and he attempts to displace, or at least redefine, the referentiality of literature, to displace the sovereignty of meaning. A Short Sad Book is integrated at the ludic level, and could perhaps be considered as an example of performative postmodern writing; his work treats language and the rules of meaning as a game that both the writer and the reader engage in. Bowering and Beaulieu are both self-reflexive and postmodern; their texts disrupt referentiality through the narration of narrating and offer, finally, a deliberately self-defeating narrative, reflecting the ontological uncertainty of postmodernism.

Throughout this thesis, I have distinguished between epistemology and ontology as representing, in McHale's terms, the dominant of modernist and postmodernist writing. I believe this is a valid and useful distinction. The issues and questions that postmodernist writers address and that define postmodernism are fundamentally ontological:

> What is fiction? What is the relation between the fictive and the real, between fiction and its creator, between the fictional world and the text? what relations hold between different 'possible worlds,' where are the boundaries between them, and what happens when these boundaries are crossed?[14]

On the basis of this distinction, I have classified the novels of Wiebe and Hébert as modern; they are exploring essentially epistemological questions: ways of knowing, the communication of knowledge and the limits of knowledge. The novels of Bowering and Beaulieu, in contrast, are postmodern because they illustrate precisely those questions listed in the quote above: what is fiction? What are fictional worlds?

Wiebe and Hébert create a verisimilitude by denying their own presence and the presence of the reader. In both texts, a certain reality is tacitly assumed without ever being directly approached. Thus, Wiebe's work is perhaps more closely associated with the traditions of Tolstoy's realism, and Hébert's, with James' psychological realism, than either work is with postmodernism. Bowering and Beaulieu, in their separate ways, are objecting to precisely such an assumption of reality as "an absolute and immutable given condition."[15] Both lead the reader to a different realization: there are competing realities, and if there is an absolute reality, we will never know it absolutely. As for written reality, it is all fiction.

Along the spectrum of metafiction as defined by Waugh, Wiebe's text can be placed at one end with "texts that take fictionality as a theme to be explored."[16] Wiebe explores, specifically, the writing of history and historical narrative. Hébert's text can be placed at the centre, with those texts that "manifest symptoms of formal and ontological insecurity but allow their deconstructions to be finally recontextualized," and which are, therefore, sometimes termed "new realism."[17] Bowering's and Beaulieu's texts, however, are more extreme; they must be placed further along the spectrum, tending towards fictions that, "in rejecting realism more thoroughly, posit the world as a fabrication of competing semiotic systems which never correspond to material conditions."[18] Such texts are using metafictional techniques to reflect an ontological indeterminacy, and can also, therefore, be considered postmodern.

All of these works contain metafictional elements and reflect varying degrees of self-consciousness. However, the metafictional elements in Wiebe and Hébert serve to enhance the referential and pragmatic function of language. Wiebe and Hébert are therefore explicitly self-reflexive, but only implicitly self-conscious. In Bowering and Beaulieu, the metafictional elements serve to disrupt the referentiality of language, to focus the reader's attention on that which is conventionally ignored or hidden by realistic and even modernist writers. Beaulieu is explicitly self-conscious without being very self-reflexive, and Bowering is overtly both self-reflexive and self-conscious.

Each of these writers shows an awareness of postmodern aesthetics and theory, and the term "postmodern" has been used to describe all of them. It is obvious, however, that four such different works should not be subsumed under a common label and description. These novels demonstrate that it is necessary not only to discriminate among types and degrees of self-consciousness, but also to be aware of the variety of purposes that can be served by such devices. Hence, "metafiction" cannot be equated with "postmodernism." Self-conscious writing is a strategy that has been used by novelists, beginning with Cervantes, for as many reasons as there are books. It is therefore necessary to limit our critical definitions of metafiction to its formal level: as a mode of writing which operates in conjunction with and in opposition to the conventions of mimetic writing. It is also necessary to expand and clarify our critical concepts of postmodernism, to move beyond viewing it simply as writing which displays and indicates the unreality of all our concepts of reality. The texts discussed in this thesis demonstrate that it is possible to be metafictional without being postmodern, and to be postmodern with differing degrees of metafictionality. It is necessary to discriminate between such techniques as metafictional writing, that a writer may use, and such literary codes as postmodernism, that a writer may be reflecting and operating within. "Metafiction" and "postmodernism" are not modes of writing or discourses that overlap; rather, one is a technique that may be used, and often is, to reflect the radical ontological rupture embodied in the world view of the other.

# Notes

## Chapter One

[1] Sarah E. Lauzen, "Notes on Metafiction: Every Essay Has a Title" in *Postmodern Fiction: A Bio-Bibliographical Guide*, Larry McCaffery, ed. (New York: Greenwood Press, 1985) 94.

[2] Larry McCaffery, Introduction, *Postmodern Fiction: A Bio-Bibliographical Guide* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1985) i.

[3] Lauzen, 94.

[4] Patricia Waugh, *Metafiction: The Theory and Practice of Self-Conscious Fiction* (New York: Methuen, 1984) 2.

[5] Waugh, 2.

[6] Waugh, 5.

[7] Waugh, 14.

[8] Robert Alter, *Partial Magic: The Novel as Self-Conscious Genre* (Berkley: University of California Press, 1975) x.

[9] Waugh, 15.

[10] Alter, xi.

[11] Alter, x.

[12] Linda Hutcheon, "Challenging the Conventions of Realism: Postmodernism in Canadian Literature," *The Canadian Forum* 66, No. 758 (April 1986) 38.

[13] Arthur Kroker and David Cook, *The Postmodern Scene: Excremental Culture and Hyper-Aesthetics*, 2nd.ed. (Montreal: New World Perspectives, 1986, 1987) 8.

[14] Brian McHale, *Postmodernist Fiction*, (New York: Methuen, 1987) 5.

[15] McHale, *Postmodernist Fiction*, xi.

[16] McHale, *Postmodernist Fiction*, xii.

[17] McHale, *Postmodernist Fiction*, 5.

[18] McHale, *Postmodernist Fiction*, 7.

[19] Douwe Fokkema and Hans Bertens, Foreword, *Approaching Postmodernism: Papers presented at a Workshop on Postmodernism September 21-23, 1984, at the University of Utrecht*, Douwe W. Fokkema and Hans Bertens, eds. (Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 1986) viii.

[20] Douwe Fokkema, "The Semantic and Syntactic Organization ofPostmodernist Texts," *Approaching Postmodernism*, 81.

[21] Waugh, 22.

[22] Fokkema, "Semantic and Syntactic Organization," 84.

## Chapter Two

[1] Douwe W. Fokkema, "Preliminary Remarks," *Approaching Postmodernism*, 3.

[2] Fokkema, "Preliminary Remarks," 1.

[3] Fokkema, "Preliminary Remarks," 4.

[4] Fokkema, "Preliminary Remarks," 2.

[5] Hans Bertens, "The Postmodern *Weltanschauung* and its Relation with Modernism: An Introductory Survey," *Approaching Postmodernism*, 10.

[6] Hutcheon, *Canadian Forum*, 37.

[7] McCaffery, i.

[8] Fokkema and Bertens, Foreword, *Approaching Postmodernism*, vii.

[9] McCaffery, ii.

[10] McCaffery, ii.

[11] Annie Dillard, *Living by Fiction* (New York: Harper & Row, 1982) 23,24.

[12] Brian McHale, *Postmodernist Fiction* (New York: Methuen, 1987) 9,10.

[13] Hutcheon, *Canadian Forum*, 34.

[14] McCaffery, xxi.

[15] Bertens, *Survey*, 19.

[16] Bertens, *Survey*, 20.

[17] Waugh, 13.

[18] McCaffery, xiii.

[19] Bertens, *Survey*, 28.

[20] Bertens, *Survey*, 30. All further references to this work appear in the text.

[21] Fokkema, "Semantic and Syntactic Organization," 82,83.

[22] Jürgen Habermas, "Modernity versus Postmodernity," *New German Critique*, No.22 (Winter 1981) 13.

[23] Habermas, 13.

[24] François Lyotard, cited in Hutcheon, *Canadian Forum*, 36.

[25] Brian McHale, "Change of Dominant from Modernist to Postmodernist Writing," *Approaching Postmodernism*, 74.

[26] McCaffery, xvi.

[27] McHale, *Postmodernist Fiction*, 220.

[28] Waugh, 10.

[29] Waugh, 18.

[30] Waugh, 11.

[31] Lauzen, 95.

[32] Linda Hutcheon, *Narcissistic Narrative: The Metafictional Paradox* (New York: Methuen, 1980) 28-33.

[33] Hutcheon, *Narcissistic Narrative*, 22.

[34] Lauzen, 95.

[35] Waugh, 32.

[36] Waugh, 32.

[37] Waugh, 24.

[38] Waugh, 7.

[39] Dillard, 53.

[40] Margaret A. Rose, Parody/Metafiction, (London: Croom Helm, 1979) 17.

[41] Waugh, 14.

[42] Waugh, 14.

[43] Waugh, 6.

[44] McHale, Postmodernist Fiction, 11.

[45] Waugh, 25.

[46] Alter~~, x.~~

[47] Waugh, 29.

[48] McHale, Postmodernist Fiction, 221.

[49] McHale, Postmodernist Fiction, 221.

[50] McHale, Postmodernist Fiction, 222.

[51] Alter, xiv.

[52] McCaffery, xxii.

[53] R. Con Davis, ed., *Contemporary Literary Criticism*, (New York: Longman, 1986) 8.

[54] Dillard, 130.

## Chapter Three

[1] Linda Hutcheon, "Postmodern Paratextuality and History," *Texte: Revue de Critique et de Théorie Littéraire*, 5/6, (1986/87) 301,302.

[2] Hutcheon, *Texte*, 302,305.

[3] Hutcheon, *Texte*, 307,308.

[4] Hutcheon, *Texte*, 307.

[5] Linda Hutcheon, "Challenging the Conventions of Realism: Postmodernism in Canadian Literature," *The Canadian Forum*, 66, (April 1986), No. 758, 36.

[6] Hutcheon, *Canadian Forum*, 36.

[7] W. J. Keith, *Epic Fiction: the Art of Rudy Wiebe* (Edmonton: The University of Alberta Press, 1981) 63.

[8] Rudy Wiebe, quoted in *The Canadian Novel: Here and Now*, John Moss, ed., (Toronto: NC Press Limited, 1978) 183.

[9] Wiebe, quoted in Keith, 66.

[10] Hutcheon, *Texte*, 305.

[11] Keith, 68.

[12] Susan Whaley, "Narrative Voices in *The Temptations of Big Bear*," *Essays on Canadian Writing*, No. 20, (Winter 1980-81) 142.

[13] Whaley, 134,135.

[14] Whaley, 139.

[15] Whaley, 142.

[16] Whaley, 138.

[17] John Moss, Sex and Violence in the Canadian Novel (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1977) 267.

[18] Robert Kroetsch, quoted in Keith, 77.

[19] Whaley, 147.

[20] Jürgen Schäfer, "A Farewell to Europe: Rudy Wiebe's The Temptations of Big Bear and Robert Kroetsch's Gone Indian" in Gaining Ground: European Critics on Canadian Literature, R. Kroetsch and R. M. Nischik, eds. Western Canadian Literary Documents Series, Vol. VI, (Edmonton: NeWest Press, 1985) 82.

[21] Keith, 69.

[22] Hutcheon, Texte, 310,311.

[23] John Moss, A Reader's Guide to the Canadian Novel, 2nd ed., (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1987) 370.

[24] Lauzen, 106,107.

[25] Frank Davey, quoted in George Woodcock, Northern Spring (Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 1987) 99.

[26] Woodcock, 100.

[27] Whaley, 134,135,147.

28
Moss, A Reader´s Guide, 371.

29
Moss, Sex and Violence, 259.

30
Wiebe, quoted in Keith, 67.

31
Wiebe, quoted in Keith, 81.

32
Wiebe, quoted in Keith, 8.

33
J. David, R. Lecker and E. Quigley, eds., Canadian Writers and Their Works, Vol.IX, (Toronto: ECW Press, 1987) 323.

34
Alan Dueck, "Rudy Wiebe´s Approach to Historical Fiction: A Study of The Temptations of Big Bear and The Scorched-Wood People" in Here and Now, 183.

35
Woodcock, 94.

36
Lauzen, 102.

37
Janet M. Paterson, "Anne Hébert and the Discourse of the Unreal," Yale French Studies: The Language of Difference: Writing in Quebec(ois), 65, (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1983) 172.

38
Paterson, Yale French Studies, 172.

39
Jeffrey M. Heath, Series ed.,"Anne Hébert," by Janet Paterson, Profiles in Canadian Literature, Vol.3 (Toronto: Dundurn Press Limited, 1982) 115.

40
Paterson, Yale French Studies, 173.

41
Paterson, Yale French Studies, 173,175.

42
Janet M. Paterson, Anne Hébert: Architexture Romanesque (Ottawa: Éditions de l'Université d'Ottawa, 1985) 160.

43
Paterson, Architexture, 159.

44
Paterson, Yale French Studies, 173.

45
Paterson, Yale French Studies, 180.

46
Grazia Merler. "On Hébert," Canadian Literature, No.99 (Winter 1983) 132.

47
M. Cagnon, The French Novel of Quebec (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1986) 65.

48
Cagnon, 65.

49
Cagnon, 65.

50
Neil B.Bishop, "Distance, point de vue, voix et idéologie dans 'les Fous de Bassan' d'Anne Hébert," Voix et Images, Vol. IX, 2 (Hiver 1984) 115.

51
Paterson, Architexture, 160.

52
G. Genette, Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method, trans. Jane E. Lewin, (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1980) 246.

53
Paterson, Yale French Studies, 181.

54
Bishop, 115.

55
Paterson, Yale French Studies, 182.

56
Paterson, Yale French Studies, 182,183.

[57] Paterson, *Yale French Studies*, 182.

[58] Heath, 115.

[59] Merler, 133.

[60] Cagnon, 67.

[61] Merler, 133.

[62] Merler, 133.

[63] Paterson, *Yale French Studies*, 183.

[64] Merler, 133.

[65] Cagnon, 67.

[66] Bishop, 128.

[67] Bishop, 128.

[68] Paterson, *Architexture*, 165.

[69] Paterson, *Architexture*, 166.

[70] Paterson, *Architexture*, 163.

[71] Fokkema, "Semantic and Syntactic Organization," 88.

[72] Bertens, *Survey*, 47.

[73] Paterson, *Yale French Studies*, 185.

[74] Bishop, 121.

[75] Bishop, 121.

[76] Poulin, quoted in Bishop, 123.

[77] Paterson, *Architexture*, 179.

[78] McHale, *Postmodernist Fiction*, 9.

[79] A. Purdy, *A Certain Difficulty of Being: Essays on the Quebec Novel*, 176. Unpublished manuscript.

### Chapter Four

[1] Lauzen, 95.

[2] John Moss, *Present Tense: The Canadian Novel* Vol. IV, (Toronto: NC Press Limited, 1985) 252.

[3] Eva-Marie Kroller, "Reassembling Genres," *Canadian Literature*, 88, (Spring 1981) 95.

[4] Cagnon, 123.

[5] Cagnon, 123.

[6] Cagnon, 123.

[7] Fokkema, "Semantic and Syntactic Oganization," 89.

[8] Cagnon, 123.

[9] Kroller, 95.

[10] G. Bessette, *Trois romanciers quebecois* (Montreal: Éditions du Jour, 1973) 83.

[11] Gerhard Hoffmann, quoted in Fokkema, "Semantic and Syntactic Organization," 88.

[12] Cagnon, 123.

[13] Moss, A Reader´s Guide, 391-392.

[14] Kroller, 95.

[15] Kroller, 95.

[16] Moss, Present Tense, 253.

[17] Gabrielle Poulin, Romans Du Pays: 1968 - 1979 (Montreal: Les Éditions Bellarmin, 1980) 400.

[18] Poulin, 377.

[19] Poulin, 384.

[20] Poulin, 400.

[21] Kroller, 96.

[22] Cagnon, 123.

[23] Moss, Present Tense, 259.

[24] G. Genette, Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method, trans. Jane E. Lewin, (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1980) 247.

[25] Lauzen, 106.

[26] Bessette, 88.

27 Cagnon, 124.

28 Bertens, Survey, 21.

29 Smaro Kamboureli, "A Window Onto George Bowering's Fiction of Unrest" in The Canadian Novel: Present Tense, John Moss, ed., (Toronto: NC Press Limited, 1985) 207.

30 George Bowering, The Mask in Place: Essays on Fiction in North America (Winnipeg: Turnstone Press, 1982) 21.

31 Janet Giltrow, quoted in "George Bowering," Contemporary Literary Criticism, D.G. Marowski and R. Matuz, eds., Vol.47, (Detroit, Michigan: Gail Research Company, 1988) 26.

32 D.G. Marowski and R. Matuz, eds. "George Bowering." Contemporary Literary Criticism, Vol.47, (Detroit, Michigan: Gail Research Company, 1988) 18.

33 Contemporary Literary Criticism, 19.

34 Bowering, quoted in Kamboureli, 222.

35 Moss, A Reader's Guide, 31.

36 Kamboureli, 208.

37 Bowering, The Mask in Place, 116.

38 G. Davies, quoted in Contemporary Literary Criticism, 25.

39 J. Seim, quoted in Contemporary Literary Criticism, 29.

40 Kamboureli, 224.

[41] Bowering, quoted in Kamboureli, 223.

[42] Kamboureli, 224.

[43] Moss, A Reader´s Guide, 31.

[44] Waugh, 35,36.

[45] Kamboureli, 222.

[46] Kamboureli, 223.

[47] Moss, Present Tense, 253.

[48] Moss, A Reader´s Guide, 31.

[49] Kamboureli, 225.

[50] Kamboureli, 228.

[51] Kamboureli, 229.

[52] Kamboureli, 211.

[53] Bowering, The Mask in Place, 120.

[54] Kamboureli, 212.

[55] Kamboureli, 211.

[56] Bowering, The Mask in Place, 82.

[57] Kamboureli, 217.

[58] Lauzen, 102.

59
Moss, _Present Tense_, 252.

60
Moss, _Present Tense_, 252-253.

61
Moss, _Present Tense_, 255.

62
Moss, _Present Tense_, 254.

63
Moss, _Present Tense_, 256.

64
Moss, _Present Tense_, 255.

65
Moss, _Present Tense_, 261.

66
Moss, _Present Tense_, 262.

## Chapter Five

1
Bertens, _Survey_, 47.

2
Bertens, _Survey_, 47-48.

3
Bertens, _Survey_, 48.

4
Dillard, 32-33.

5
Bertens, _Survey_, 24.

6
McHale, _Postmodernist Fiction_, 221.

7
James Mellard, quoted in Bertens, _Survey_, 38.

8
Hutcheon, _Texte_, 303.

9
Con Davis, 9.

[10] Brian McHale, "Mastering the Moderns," Canadian Review of Comparative Literature, M. V. Dimic, ed., Vol. XII, No.1, (March 1985) 147.

[11] McHale, CRCL, 147.

[12] Dillard, 25.

[13] Moss, Present Tense, 12.

[14] McHale, CRCL, 152.

[15] Kamboureli, 207.

[16] Waugh, 18.

[17] Waugh, 19.

[18] Waugh, 19.

# WORKS CONSULTED

## Primary Sources

Beaulieu, Victor-Lévy. *les Grands-pères*. Montreal: Éditions du Jour, 1971.

Bowering George. *A Short Sad Book*. Vancouver: Talonbooks, 1977.

Hébert, Anne. *les Fous de Bassan*. Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1982.

Wiebe, Rudy. *The Temptations of Big Bear*. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1973.

## Secondary Sources

Alter, Robert. *Partial Magic: The Novel as a Self-Conscious Genre*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1975.

Bakhtin, Mikhail. *Rabelais and his World*. Trans. Helene Iswolsky. Massachusetts: The M.I.T. Press, 1968.

Bishop, Neil B. "Distance, point de vue, voix et idéologie dans ´les Fous de Bassan´ d´Anne Hébert." *Voix et Images* Vol. IX, 2 (Hiver 1984), 114-129.

Bertens, Hans and Douwe W. Fokkema, eds. *Approaching Postmodernism: Papers presented at a Workshop on Postmodernism September 21-23, 1984, at the University of Utrecht*. Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 1986.

Bertens, Hans. "The Postmodern *Weltanschauung* and its Relation with Modernism: An Introductory Survey" in *Approaching Postmodernism*, 9-51.

Bessette, G. *Trois romanciers québécois*. Montreal: Éditions du Jour, 1973.

Bowering, George. *The Mask in Place: Essays on Fiction in North America*. Winnipeg: Turnstone Press, 1982.

Cagnon, M. *The French Novel of Quebec*. Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1986.

Con Davis, R., ed. *Contemporary Literary Criticism*. New York: Longman, 1986.

David, J., R. Lecker and E. Quigley, eds. "Rudy Wiebe." *Canadian Writers and Their Works* Vol. IX, Toronto: ECW Press, 1987. 313-373

Dillard, Annie. *Living By Fiction*. New York: Harper & Row, 1982.

Dueck, Allen. "Rudy Wiebe's Approach to Historical Fiction: A Study of 'The Temptations of Big Bear' and 'The Scorched Wood People'" in *The Canadian Novel: Here and Now*. John Moss, ed. 182-200.

Fokkema, D. W. *Literary History, Modernism, and Postmodernism*. Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Banjamins Publishing Company, 1984.

Fokkema, D. W. "Preliminary Remarks." *Approaching Postmodernism*, 1-7.

Fokkema, D. W. "The Semantic and Syntactic Organization of Postmodernist Texts." *Approaching Postmodernism*, 81-98.

Fokkema, D. W. and H. Bertens. Foreword. *Approaching Postmodernism*, vii-x.

Genette, Gerard. *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method*. Trans. Jane E. Lewin. Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1980.

Graff, G. *Literature Against itself: Literary Ideas in Modern Society*. The University of Chicago Press: Chicago, 1979.

Gazia, Merler. "On Hébert." *Canadian Literature*, No.99 (Winter 1983), 132-5.

Habermas, Jürgen. "Modernity versus Postmodernity." *New German Critique*, No.22 (Winter 1981) 3-14.

Heath, Jeffrey M., Series ed. "Anne Hébert." *Profiles in Canadian Literature*. Vol.3, Toronto: Dundurn Press Limited, 1982. 113-120.

Heath, Jeffrey M., Series Ed. "Rudy Wiebe." *Profiles in Canadian Literature*. Vol.2, Toronto: Dundurn Press Limited, 1982. 65-72.

Hutcheon, Linda. "Postmodern Paratextuality and History." *Texte: Revue de Critique et de Théorie Littéraire*. 5/6, (1986/87), 301-12.

Hutcheon, Linda. "Challenging the Conventions of Realism: Postmodernism in Canadian Literature." The Canadian Forum 66, (April 1986), No. 758, 34-38.

Hutcheon, Linda. Narcissistic Narrative: The Metafictional Paradox. New York: Methuen, 1984.

Kamboureli, Smaro. "A Window Onto George Bowering's Fiction of Unrest" in The Canadian Novel: Present Tense. John Moss, ed. Toronto: NC Press Limited, 1985. 207-231.

Keith, W. J. Epic Fiction: the Art of Rudy Wiebe. Edmonton: The University of Alberta Press, 1981.

Kroetsch, R. and R. M. Nischik, eds. Gaining Ground: European Critics on Canadian Literature. Western Canadian Literary Documents Series, Vol. VI. Edmonton: NeWest Press, 1985.

Kroker, Arthur and David Cook. The Postmodern Scene: Excremental Culture and Hyper-Aesthetics. 2nd. ed. Montréal: New World Perspectives, 1986,1987.

Kroller, Eva-Marie. "Reassembling Genres." Canadian Literature 88, (Spring 1981), 93-96.

Lauzen, Sarah E. "Notes on Metafiction: Every Essay Has a Title" in Postmodern Fiction: A Bio-Bibliographical Guide. Larry McCaffery, ed. New York: Greenwood Press, 1985.

Lyotard, François. The Postmodern Condition. Trans. Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984.

Marowski D.G. and R. Matuz, eds. "George Bowering." Contemporary Literary Criticism, Vol.47. Detroit, Michigan: Gail Research Company, 1988.

McCaffery, Larry, ed. Postmodern Fiction: a Bio-Bibliographical Guide. New York: Greenwood Press, 1985.

McHale, Brian. "Mastering the Moderns." Canadian Review of Comparative Literature. M. V. Dimic, ed. Vol. XII, No.1, (March 1985) 138-153.

McHale, Brian. "Change of Dominant from Modernist to Postmodernist Writing." in Approaching Postmodernism, 53-79.

McHale, Brian. Postmodernist Fiction. New York: Methuen, 1987.

Moss, J. Sex and Violence in the Canadian Novel. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1977.

Moss, J. The Canadian Novel Here and Now. Vol.I. Toronto: NC Press Limited, 1978.

Moss, J. The Canadian Novel: Present Tense. Vol.IV. Toronto: NC Press Limited, 1985.

Moss, J. "Himmler´s Got the King: An Essay on ´Badlands´ and ´Burning Water´" in The Canadian Novel: Present Tense. John Moss, ed. Toronto: NC Press Limited, 1985.

Moss, J. A Reader´s Guide to the Canadian Novel. 2nd ed. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1987.

Ong, Walter J. Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word. New York: Methuen,1982.

Paterson, Janet M. Anne Hébert: Architexture Romanesque. Ottawa: Éditions de l´Université d´Ottawa, 1985.

Paterson, Janet M. "Anne Hébert and the Discourse of the Unreal." Yale French Studies: The Language of Difference: Writing in Quebec(ois), 65. New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1983. 172-86.

Poulin, Gabrielle. Romans Du Pays: 1968 - 1979. Montreal: Les Éditions Bellarmin, 1980.

Purdy, Anthony. A Certain Difficulty of Being: Essays on the Quebec Novel. Unpublished manuscript.

Rose, Margaret A. Parody/Metafiction. London: Croom Helm, 1979.

Schäfer, Jürgen. "A Farewell to Europe: Rudy Wiebe´s ´The Temptations of Big Bear´ and Robert Kroetsch´s ´Gone Indian.´" Gaining Ground: European Critics on Canadian Literature. R. Kroetsch and R. M. Nischik, eds. Western Canadian Literary Documents Series, Vol. VI. Edmonton: NeWest Press, 1985.

Waugh, Patricia. Metafiction: The Theory and Practice of Self-Conscious Fiction. London: Methuen, 1984.

Woodcock, George. Northern Spring: The Flowering of Canadian Literature. Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 1987.